



“The righteous . . . shall grow
like a cedar in Lebanon”

Psalm 92:12

Reading Companion
to the Book of
1 Samuel

*“So they read in the book in the law of God . . .
and caused them to understand the reading”*

Nehemiah 8:8

By

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Preface

The contents of this book were part of a course taught in the Bible College at New Germany Baptist Church in 2010. In order to present these materials in a form more readily available for further class use we have kept the class divisions used in the course. Therefore listed separately on the following Contents page you will find the starting pages for the 20 class portions as well as for the 31 chapters of the book of I Samuel.

The study of this book has been a surprisingly rewarding challenge. We find lessons on repentance here. It was two men, Eli and Saul, religious and civil leaders, who refused to honour God's Word or repent of their sin. Both therefore suddenly and tragically came to their end. Then it was their two young replacements in Samuel and David. Both godly men from their youth, who lived and died in peace. It is a simple yet vital principle underscored by God here, one we do well to remember. The one who is wilful against God suffers and falls, while the one who is walking with God prospers and soars. *God-rejecters* are on their way out, while *God-respecters* are on their way in and up. Which one are you my friend? Please allow this question to be foremost in your mind as you study with us.

Bill Daniels

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As well as; “Through the Beloved Book of Books
A Survey of the New Testament”

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“Moses and Aaron
among His priests,
and Samuel among them
that call upon His name;
they called upon the LORD,
and He answered them”

(Psalm 99:6)

Class 1 – Introduction

God's record of history is unique in that it is *God's* record of history. His Book is a spiritual book, given by His grace through the inspiration of the Spirit for our learning, whether it be history, poetry, or prophecy. Yet never does the Lord merely trace historical events. Always there is purpose in what He records and what He leaves out. His purpose is to glorify His name in the winning of souls and the feeding of His saints

This book of I Samuel is God's revelation of man and the outworking of his sin nature, with the tragic consequences. And it is God's revelation of Himself in His sovereign, gracious dealings with men. There are priceless treasures to be found here for the one with a will to discover them, to search them out in all of the subtle places God has hidden them within His record of history, like a great treasure hunt. There are precious gems to be had for the one seeking God's wisdom as silver and searching "*for her as for hid treasures*". There are vital doctrinal and practical lessons in godly understanding and living available here for the one who inclines his ear and applies his heart and cries after knowledge and lifts up his voice for understanding (Prov. 2). With greatest anticipation and pleasure I enter into this

study with you.

Author

As the book of Hebrews in the New Testament (N.T.) the authorship of the books of Samuel is not evident on the surface with no clear statement given in the book. It is likely that Samuel, that godly prophet, priest, and judge who features so prominently in the early chapters of I Samuel, is the one who wrote most of this first book. Samuel's influence and significance continues into the second book of Samuel as well in that he anointed to office both kings (Saul and David) in focus within these two books of history. Thus Samuel was the last of the judges over the nation of Israel, ushering in the era of the kings. For the above reasons, and because of the highest regard with which the Jews held Samuel, the books appropriately carry his name. I Chronicles 29:29 puts the prophets Nathan and Gad together with Samuel in recording "*the acts of David*". Thus Jewish tradition suggests that these men picked up the pen after Samuel's death in continuing the record (I Sam. 25:1).

The Hebrew Bible puts I & II Samuel together as one book called "Samuel" and I & II Kings as one book called "Kings". When the Greek translation of the

Old Testament (Septuagint or LXX) was produced some 2-3 centuries before Christ the two books of “Samuel” and “Kings” were divided into the four books of the Kings, the Latin Vulgate later following with the same. This 4-part division was later kept in producing the English Bible, but also adopting the old Hebrew names, “Samuel” & “Kings”, resulting in the books and names with which we are familiar.

Basic Outline

Samuel (chapter 1-8)

Saul (chapter 9-15)

- Rising (chapter 9-12)
- Falling (chapter 13-15)

David (chapter 16-31)

- Rising (chapter 16-17)
- Trouble with Saul (chapter 18-26)
- In Ziklag (chapter 27-31)

Distinctives

There are important lessons to be found herein concerning the work of the Holy Spirit and prayer

and the blessing of obedience and consequences of disobedience. We see repeatedly the truth portrayed that when men walk with God His blessing is upon their lives, and when men chose to esteem God unimportant in their lives there are always dire consequences. When the man involved was a national leader his blessing or cursing invariably had an impact on the nation as a whole.

The psalmist names Samuel as *“among them that called upon His name; they called upon the LORD, and He answered them”* (Ps. 99:6). Samuel is noteworthy as a man of prayer and obedience (as was his mother). The same is implied in Jeremiah 15:1, where the Lord stated that *“though Moses and Samuel stood before Me, yet My mind could not be toward this people”*. The Lord Himself indicates that these two men were chiefest among notable intercessors in their day. Great men for God are always praying men. Compare I Samuel 1:10-28; 7:5-10; 8:6, 21; 12:18-19, 23.

It is not surprising that an important spiritual turning can be traced within the I Samuel account. The final chapters of the book of Judges chart a dying interest in God’s things among the Jewish people. As the book of I Samuel opens the nation had fallen to a deep spiritual low, such that *“the*

word of the LORD was precious [or rare] in those days” (3:1). It was that same era when *“every man did that which was right in his own eyes”* (Judges 21:25). Whenever men live for themselves the Lord and His words fall to obscurity and seeming irrelevance. The corrupt influence of Eli’s sons at the religious heart of the nation had a devastating impact on the national will to worship as well (2:17). But then God raised up godly Samuel and sent his influence across the land like a reviving stream in the desert. For *“all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba”* came to recognize *“that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the LORD”* (3:20), *“and the word of Samuel came to all Israel”* (4:1). With time a measure of spiritual revival resulted among God’s people (7:3-4), and God began fighting for them again as evidenced in their great victory against the Philistines at Mizpeh (chapter 7).

Samuel may have been instrumental in leading a group or school of prophets as well, men seemingly involved in training for ministry and in spiritual work throughout the land. For we first begin to hear of such a group after Samuel’s rise to prominence in a spiritually dark day (10:5; 19:18-20).

The book of I Samuel provides the transition from the days of judges guiding the nation of Israel to the

days of kings ruling over the nation; from God's more direct rule over His people (theocracy) to the rule of a human king (monarchy). This transition is found in chapter 8, when the people of Israel did just what Moses had prophesied in demanding a king to rule over them (Deut. 17:14). Reasons for their demand for a king;

- Samuel's sons were not godly (8:3-5). Oh the heartache!
- They wanted to be like all the nations around them (8:20).
- They wanted one to go before them and fight their battles (8:20).

Prior to this time the people were forced to depend or call upon the Lord by faith, that He might raise up a deliverer when they needed one. But in Samuel's day they sought to rid themselves of the intangible uncertainty of trusting their unseen God for their safety. They wanted a king and army that they could see. Thus the public appointment of Saul in 10:19-24 marked Israel's turn from theocracy to monarchy. Samuel warned the nation of the resulting changes;

- There would now be a royal family and an heir apparent to the throne for each new

generation (dynasty). Rather than a more classless society as before, there would now be a privileged class (royal family and friends, property, palaces, stables, etc.).

- There would be central power, and thus the danger of that power being abused.
- There would be a government headquarters (somewhat eclipsing the tabernacle as the centre of the nation).
- Taxation.
- Call-up to military service.

Survey

Chapter 1

- Hannah's problem and prayer – In describing her praying, Hannah said “*I...have poured out my soul before the LORD*” (vs. 15). Through intensity in prayer she received her request from God.
- Samuel is born and dedicated – Hannah so bravely and faithfully kept her vow (vs. 11, 27-28), and how God blessed her and her nation through her sacrifice!

Chapter 2

- Hannah's song of thanksgiving was similar to Mary's (Lk. 1:46-55). She gave thanks after giving Samuel to Eli's care. Though leaving her little boy must have been the very hardest thing she ever did (a bit like Abraham's offering of Isaac), it was for the Lord and so her heart was filled with rejoicing (vs. 1).
- The first mention of Samuel was to find him ministering "*unto the LORD*" (vs. 11). Young Samuel went from strength to strength in faithful service to the Lord in an environment of corruption (vs. 21 & 26).
- Trace the similarities of character between Samuel and his mother.

Chapter 3

- Eli's fall and Samuel's call – It is a contrast between godly young Samuel on the rise (vs. 11, 18, 21, 26) and Eli falling through compromise. This because Samuel was hearing and receiving from the Lord while Eli would not hear, and thus met sudden destruction (Prov. 29:1). We will later see the same contrast between godless Saul and faithful young David.

- Though Eli was in a position of spiritual leadership he was in secret rebellion against God.

Chapter 4

- The tragic battle of Aphek and its results;
 - o Eli's sons, Hophni & Phinehas, were killed.
 - o The ark was taken.
 - o Eli died.
 - o Phinehas' wife died in child-bearing.
 - o Israel fell under Philistine bondage.
- The glory of God was departed (Ichabod) as Israel bottomed out spiritually.

Chapter 5-6

- Do not miss the humour as the captured ark proved too hot to handle and thus was bounced around Philistia and finally sent back across the border. Tis a sad day indeed and a needed eye-opener when you have to pick up your god and even glue the pieces back together (5:3). Compare the Jews sewing the temple veil back together when

torn at Christ's death.

Chapter 7

- Samuel's leadership and ministry begins – He was a man of prayer (vs. 5 & 9), and God was working mightily in answer to Samuel's prayers as He had for his mother. A godly mother's prayer and sacrifice resulted in a godly leader, who led the people to spiritual victory, which led to success and peace on a national scale (vs. 13-14).

Chapter 8

- God's permissive will becomes evident here in their call for a king. *"He gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul"* (Ps. 106:15). They got what they demanded, but lost what they had!

Chapter 9-10

- God's sovereign control in selecting Saul (chapter 9).
- Saul became Israel's 1st king;
 - o Privately anointed (10:1).
 - o Publicly appointed (10:17-25).

- Saul had much going for him to suggest him a promising king;
 - He was an impressive man in appearance, for he was “*a choice young man, and a goodly* [handsome]”, none “*goodlier*” in fact (9:2), and he was taller than all (10:23).
 - He was thoughtful of his father (9:5).
 - He seemed humble (9:21).
 - When he set his heart to a purpose he demanded loyalty (11:6-7).
- Though Saul had the outward appearance of true kingly material, he did not have a heart for God. His spiritual negligence led him to fear men over God, which was his downfall. In contrast to the two other main characters in this book (Samuel & David), both men of prayer, how often do we see Saul praying, if ever? Do we ever hear real repentance or confession from him, beyond just selfish sorrow for getting caught or incurring loss? Both Samuel and David found it necessary to bring rebuke to this spiritual sluggard. Few Bible characters came to such a pitiable condition as King Saul in the final hours of his life.

Chapter 11

- Saul proved himself in victory over the attacking Ammonites when they came up against Jabesh Gilead.

Chapter 12

- Samuel's final charge in handing over leadership to Saul.

Chapter 13

- Saul's 1st failure in impatiently offering a sacrifice under threat of attack and dwindling support (vs. 8-14). Compare 10:8. It was the beginning of the end for Saul, for he took upon himself the priest's office, lightly esteeming God's command. Contrast the victories of faithful David with but a few, and of Jonathan with only two (14:6).

Chapter 14

- Jonathan and his armour-bearer begin a great slaughter of the Philistines. It is a contrast we see in this chapter between Jonathan's bold, faithful leadership and his father's thoughtless, fickle approach.

Chapter 15

- Saul's 2nd major failure in his incomplete obedience when God sent him against the Amalekites. Admission of his wrong here only came by dragging it out of him (vs. 13, 20, 24).
- The kingdom was taken from him.

Chapter 16

- Young David was anointed to be the next king though he did not look the part (vs. 7), nor did they follow the usual practice of choosing the oldest son, for David was the youngest (8th).
- The Spirit of God left Saul for David and was replaced by an evil spirit.

Chapter 17

- Goliath's challenge and David's victory and fame – Fearless faithfulness in the little responsibilities over his father's sheep prepared David for the greater opportunities over his Father's people (vs. 34-37).

Chapter 18-19

- While Jonathan befriended David, Saul became his enemy out of fear. Saul begins

his jealous, irrational, on-again-off-again pursuit of David's life.

- This illustrates the fight between the old nature and the new within the child of God (Gal. 5:16-17);
 - o The one anointed to rule, but not yet. The other rejected but still raging.
 - o David refused to help God in the wrong way but was willing to wait for God's time and power (chapters 24 & 26).

Chapter 20

- Jonathan and David covenant together in love. Saul walked his own way without the Lord and thus lived in the inward torment of jealousy and hate. David walked with the Lord and thus knew the joy of a loving friendship with Jonathan.

Chapter 21-31

- David became a fugitive on the run. Many of his psalms were perhaps written to express his heart during these troubled years. Note the subtitles of Psalms 18, 52, 54, 57, 63, 142.

Chapter 24

- David turned down his first opportunity to kill Saul, trusting God to handle things in His own way and time.

Chapter 25

- Samuel died (vs. 1).
- David met Abigail and married her after the death of her husband.

Chapter 26

- David again had opportunity and refrained from killing Saul.

Chapter 27

- David fled to Philistia (Ziklag), a place of compromise;
 - o David fled from the land of promise even though the Lord had been protecting him there, rather than continuing to trust God for his care.
 - o David was forced to lie and cover his tracks (vs. 10-11).
 - o Having joined the enemy, David was

almost led to help them against his own people (28:1-2; 29).

- It was a place of prayerlessness, for there is no record of David praying while in exile there, until the Lord brought him down to the turning point of 30:6-8.

Chapter 28

- Saul having no answer from God sought guidance through a witch. God allowed Samuel back briefly from the dead to speak Saul's doom.

Chapter 30

- David defeated the Amalekites, with captives and spoils recovered. He then sent gifts from the spoils to the elders and his friends in Judah, displaying that he was winning while Saul was losing.

Chapter 31

- Saul and sons died in battle against the Philistines, opening the door for David's rise to rule over the united kingdom of Israel.

Class 2 – I Samuel 1:1-2:17

1:1 Now there was a certain man of Ramathaimzophim, of mount Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephrathite:

This first chapter of I Samuel is a focus on Hannah, turning then in chapter 2 to that son for whom she prayed. The account of Hannah is one of the most precious in the Bible, so charged with emotion in the midst of greatest sacrifice, and yet finding such a happy ending after long patience. Thus in a sense Hannah's story parallels God's in His dealing with mankind;

- His long patience in waiting for the outworking of His purpose for man.
- His great sadness in the midst of His sacrifices for the good of mankind.
- Yet the happy ending is already written in prophecy, of man fully restored at the last to God's presence and favour.

Hannah's godly resolve and sacrifice was truly monumental, contributing hugely to the spiritual restoration of her nation.

1:2 And he had two wives; the name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah: and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children.

1:1-8 – Hannah’s Crisis

Vs. 1 – Hannah lived some 3,100 years ago with her husband Elkanah and his other wife Peninah and Peninah’s children. They lived in the town of Ramah in the hill country of Ephraim. There were several Ramah’s in the land of Israel, but this one was 8-9 kilometres (kms) north of Jerusalem. Elkanah was a descendant of Levi (I Chron. 6:22ff), thus he was among those who were meant to be helpers of the priests in the ministry of the tabernacle.

Vs. 2 – Though Peninah had sons and daughters (vs. 4) Hannah was unable to have children. Reading between the lines, it seems likely that Hannah was Elkanah’s first wife, and when her barrenness became evident he then married Peninah. So Hannah he perhaps married for love and Peninah he married for children. If it was so with them then it was a typical case of man coming up with his own arm-of-flesh solution rather than turning in dependence upon God. When Isaac and Rebekah were unable to have children Isaac “*intreated the LORD for his wife*” and God responded exceedingly abundantly with twins (Gen. 25:21).

1:3 And this man went up out of his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice unto the LORD of hosts in Shiloh. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, the priests of the LORD, were there.

Elkanah's polygamy was a common practice due to the great importance placed upon children, and particularly sons, to inherit, and perhaps stemming from the example of Abraham's fall to the same at the head of their national history. Oh how the power of influence or precedence speaks caution into our every choice.

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On the Side

Polygamy was never God's purpose for marriage. The ideal He implies from the beginning is one man with one woman for life (Gen. 2:24). God allowed the practice of polygamy, without drawing His rebuke, but it always brought jealousy and contention into the home.

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Vs. 3 – *“This man went up...yearly to worship”* – Elkanah was a devout man who honoured the Lord by attending the three yearly religious feasts at the tabernacle, which the law required all men to attend, taking his whole family along as well to at

1:4 And when the time was that Elkanah offered, he gave to Peninnah his wife, and to all her sons and her daughters, portions:

least one of these. Shiloh was at the centre of the Promised Land, some 30 kms north of Jerusalem, where the tabernacle had been set up after the conquest of the land (Josh. 18:1).

“And the two sons of Eli...were there” – This little note highlights the sacrifice involved in worshipping the Lord at the tabernacle in those days. Though it was a time when it was not easy to so honour the Lord, due to the presence of those worthless sons there (see chapter 2), yet Elkanah would go anyway. Though at the time the prevailing attitude was to avoid that place of worship due to the circumstances (2:17), yet Elkanah was not following men but God. Though there would have been much inconvenience involved in those yearly trips, for Shiloh was more than a day’s journey to the north, though it would have been so easy to excuse himself from going and fall out of the good and godly habit, though the man might feel he could quite fairly justify such avoidance, still he went anyway, every year, and took his whole family along with him. Though Hannah is certainly the star figure in this account, there is much of Elkanah’s godly influence as well in that son God would give to them.

1:5 But unto Hannah he gave a worthy portion; for he loved Hannah: but the LORD had shut up her womb.

Consider the same applied to church attendance commanded by God (Heb. 10:24-25). Your family learns to love the church of the Lord and the Lord of the church by being there. Your family learns to lightly esteem God's church by observing your low view of it demonstrated in your actions. Note well that it is from the ranks of these kinds of faithful folks that God raises up the godly leadership of a Samuel, the one who would become the very answer to the decay at Shiloh.

Vs. 4-5 – When bringing a peace offering of a sacrificed animal a portion of the meat would be given back to the offerer. This would then be shared around and eaten together in a happy family feast. It was Elkanah's custom to divide this into portions for all the members of his family and a double portion for Hannah, showing his special regard for her.

“The LORD had shut up her womb” – Hannah's barrenness was not a matter of *her* failure but the Lord's doing in His sovereign purpose for her. When it came time for her to have children it was the Lord who *“remembered her”* (vs. 19) and *“opened her*

1:6 And her adversary also provoked her sore, for to make her fret, because the LORD had shut up her womb.

1:7 And as he did so year by year, when she went up to the house of the LORD, so she provoked her; therefore she wept, and did not eat.

1:8 Then said Elkanah her husband to her, Hannah, why weepest thou? and why eatest thou not? and why is thy heart grieved? am not I better to thee than ten sons?

womb” (Gen. 30:22).

Vs. 6-7 – “*And her adversary provoked her sore*” – While Peninah’s fruitfulness was a constant reminder to Hannah of her own barrenness and that the problem was in *her*, Hannah’s double portion was a yearly reminder to Peninah that she was still 2nd fiddle no matter how many children she produced. Peninah had his children but Hannah had his heart, and Elkanah’s 2nd wife resented this special regard. It moved her to employ the one weapon she knew would always cut to the very bone and marrow of Hannah’s being, her worthlessness in producing children, with perhaps even the suggestion of God’s curse upon her (Deut. 28:18; Ps. 128:3). It was a very similar situation to Leah’s sad story of old (Gen. 29).

Vs. 8 – Though Elkanah attempted to comfort his wife by assuring her of his love, she could find no comfort. He had already brought the hurt of another wife into their home. Though the man is not faulted for this, his consoling effort comes

1:9 So Hannah rose up after they had eaten in Shiloh, and after they had drunk. Now Eli the priest sat upon a seat by a post of the temple of the LORD.

1:10 And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the LORD, and wept sore.

across a bit lame in this context. His 2nd marriage for the sake of children displayed what pleased him, the one thing Hannah could not give to the husband who loved her. This and the reproach her barrenness drew filled her with sadness.

How do *you* handle situations that bring you great sadness? Do you recoil in rebellious defiance? Do you mutter and splutter in selfish, brooding self-pity? Or do you bow your heart before the Lord in dependent prayer? Hannah chose the latter. Most people do not.

1:9-18 – Hannah’s Cry

Vs. 9-10 – “*She was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the LORD*” – Our bitter trials are meant to move us to this way of wisdom Hannah chose. Notice the progression in describing her response;

- Vs. 10 – “*She...prayed*”.
- Vs. 12 – “*She continued praying*”. In the original Hebrew behind the English translation it is literally “she multiplied to

1:11 And she vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head.

pray”.

- Vs. 15 – “*I have...poured out my soul before the LORD*”.

Leonard Ravenhill used to say that God does not answer prayer, He answers *desperate* prayer. He answers the “*effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man*” (James 5:16). Praying like this, from a heart like Hannah’s, won God’s heart and brought results.

“*Now Eli the priest sat upon a seat*” – The first time we meet Eli he is sitting. The last time we see Eli he is sitting (4:13, 18). Could this be expressive of the low motivation we later see in his handling of his sons? Not to mention contributing to his girth (4:18).

Vs. 11 – “*And she vowed a vow*” – Hannah vowed to the Lord that if He would give her a son she would dedicate him to lifelong service for the Lord as a Nazarite. The nature of the Nazarite vow is described in Numbers 6. The word “Nazarite”

1:12 And it came to pass, as she continued praying before the LORD, that Eli marked her mouth.

1:13 Now Hannah, she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard: therefore Eli thought she had been drunken.

means “separate”, and involved the entire setting apart of an individual for the Lord. The vow was marked by certain outward signs or prohibitions which served as a public testimony of dedication to God. A Nazarite must refrain from;

- Wine.
- Shaving the head.
- Ceremonial defilement through contact with dead things.

Other examples involving the same vow would be Samson and John the Baptist. If the Lord would give Hannah a son she was determined to give him back to the Lord as much as was humanly possible, as a kind of living sacrifice. How much easier to make such a vow when you have nothing in your hand and emotions are running high. How much more difficult to follow through when God has filled your hands with a child as dear as life to you.

Vs. 12-14 – Because of the earnest manner in which Hannah was praying and because of the nature of

*1:14 And Eli said unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee.
1:15 And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the LORD.
1:16 Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial: for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto.
1:17 Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him.
1:18 And she said, Let thine handmaid find grace in thy sight. So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad.*

the day, Eli mistook her for a drunken woman. It seems a bit strange and unwise that a man of his position would jump to such a conclusion without making any effort to question her first.

Vs. 15-16 – *“I...have poured out my soul before the LORD”* – This is such a fitting description of earnest prayer. It was not what she was unwisely pouring *into* herself as Eli assumed, but what she was wisely pouring *out* of her heart before the Lord.

Vs. 17-18 – *“The God of Israel grant thee thy petition”* – Hannah seems to have taken Eli’s wish for success in a prophetic sense, as an assurance that she would receive her request. Or perhaps the Lord sent a settled peace to her heart as she opened up to Him the very depths of her soul in prayer. For she walked away a changed woman, able to enjoy life again.

1:19-23 – God’s Gift to Hannah

1:19 And they rose up in the morning early, and worshipped before the LORD, and returned, and came to their house to Ramah: and Elkanah knew Hannah his wife; and the LORD remembered her.

1:20 Wherefore it came to pass, when the time was come about after Hannah had conceived, that she bare a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, Because I have asked him of the LORD.

Vs. 19 – *“The LORD remembered her”* – It was the essence of Hannah’s earnest request, that the Lord might *“remember me, and not forget thine handmaid”* (vs. 11), and remember her the Lord did. This was not just some newfound mental confidence in her, translating into a physical release of her ability to conceive, as some sort of power of suggestion or positive thinking. It was God actively at work in her, granting this ability in answer to her desperate prayer.

That Elkanah *“knew”* Hannah is a euphemism referring to their physical relations. The Hebrew verb is the main one used for knowing or being acquainted, which the King James Version (KJV) translates more literally or physically.

Vs. 20 – *“She bare a son, and called his name Samuel”* – The biblical suggestion here of the meaning of Samuel’s name is *“asked of God”*, because Hannah *“asked him of the LORD”*. Men tend to argue with this because the Hebrew behind the name does not seem to come from the verb

- 1:21 And the man Elkanah, and all his house, went up to offer unto the LORD the yearly sacrifice, and his vow.*
- 1:22 But Hannah went not up; for she said unto her husband, I will not go up until the child be weaned, and then I will bring him, that he may appear before the LORD, and there abide for ever.*
- 1:23 And Elkanah her husband said unto her, Do what seemeth thee good; tarry until thou have weaned him; only the LORD establish his word. So the woman abode, and gave her son suck until she weaned him.*
-

meaning “to ask”. But the derivation given here in the biblical text must be taken as the true one.

Vs. 21-23 – In their culture the weaning process would have taken 2-3 years. So Hannah likely missed a couple years of treks to Shiloh. Why this unwillingness in her to go up to the feast until Samuel was weaned and ready to “*abide there forever*”? Perhaps Hannah feared a weakening of her own resolve. Perhaps she did not want to see the worsening scenario at Shiloh. Perhaps it was all part of steeling herself for the very hardest thing she would ever do in her life. Much like Abraham, with knife in hand, walking that bitter road to Mt. Moriah with that son of his love by his side (Gen. 22). Even so Hannah on that 3rd yearly feast date walked with heavy heart to Shiloh to make her supreme sacrifice there. The Lord had delivered on His part. She would fulfil her vow even though the cost was so incredibly great. She would do what all of the godly of all ages are called upon to do. She would deny herself immediate pleasure for the greater glory of

1:24 And when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with three bullocks, and one ephah of flour, and a bottle of wine, and brought him unto the house of the LORD in Shiloh: and the child was young.

1:25 And they slew a bullock, and brought the child to Eli.

1:26 And she said, Oh my lord, as thy soul liveth, my lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the LORD.

1:27 For this child I prayed; and the LORD hath given me my petition which I asked of him:

1:28 Therefore also I have lent him to the LORD; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the LORD. And he worshipped the LORD there.

obedience to the God of heaven.

It is lessons in true sacrifice here. It is a revelation of the nature of God's heart and loss and sacrifice in sending His own Son to suffer and die in our behalf. Oh how could His sacrifice not mean absolutely everything to us?

1:24-28 – Hannah's Gift to God

Vs. 26 – *"I am the woman"* – Hannah reminded Eli of the incident 3 years earlier, identifying herself before him.

Vs. 27 – *"For this child I prayed"* – It was a public testimony to God's grace in answering what she had asked of Him.

Vs. 28 – *"Therefore also I have lent him to the LORD"* – How stunningly courageous this woman's godly resolve! *"Therefore"*, she said. Because the Lord had

answered her and honoured her, “*therefore*” she would honour Him in return, giving over to the Lord the most precious thing to her soul. Behind the word “*lent*” in the KJV is the idea of a complete giving up. There were absolutely no strings attached in her sacrifice. Can you picture all the host of heaven in breathless silence at that moment, looking on in wonder at Hannah’s godly resolve? For they were fully aware of the enormous cost involved to her.

Remember now that this was Hannah’s first child. Do you remember all the photos you took of your first child? Remember how very long she had waited for this one. Consider how utterly stirred she was in her emotions for this son of her love. Think about how desperately special this child would be to the husband who loved her. How she had longed to please her husband with such a boy. Remember how close Jacob held Joseph and Benjamin because they were the children of the wife he loved. Remember that God had not just given Hannah a son but had removed her reproach through that boy. Remember her history of difficulty in child-bearing, and without assurance of any further successes. Think about what it would mean to give such a precious one up to the tabernacle when he was so young. She must put him outside of the

realms of their own care and careful influences, trusting him to the care of another; another who had shown himself utterly unsuccessful in raising boys! Think of all the sweet joys of watching that boy grow up that she must deny herself. Think about your own precious child coming to identify more closely with someone else as his parent! Imagine submitting such a dear one to possible feelings of desertion, as if you did not want him. Remember the sinister influences there at Shiloh with those godless sons of Eli. What kind of an environment could that be for a tender, impressionable boy? What kind of permanent emotional damage might result? Oh the risks! How very easy to justify a change of heart.

Now we must not lose sight of Elkanah's involvement here as well. God gave instruction concerning vows in Numbers 30. One feature mentioned there is that a husband holds veto power over his wife's vows (vs. 6-8). This was Elkanah's vow and godly resolve as much as Hannah's. It is a question of who the "*he*" is worshipping the Lord at the end of vs. 28, perhaps Eli or Elkanah or both. But every costly sacrifice given to the Lord is an act of worship. When Abraham offered up Isaac, that was worship. When Mary broke and poured out the precious bottle of spikenard on Jesus, that was

- 2:1 And Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the LORD, mine horn is exalted in the LORD: my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation.*
2:2 There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God.
2:3 Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed.
-

worship. When the widow gave to the Lord the only two mites she owned, that was worship. Whenever we hand over to God our dearest, it is worship. Both husband and wife standing there holding the hands of their little boy were worshipping their God in that moment. And as they allowed those little hands to slip out of their own they were saying “no sacrifice is too great for me to give to Him”.

Though we may never be called upon to do what these parents did, there is a principle of giving our children up to the Lord even in the keeping of them. Every time we bring them the pain of godly discipline, as God has told us to do, we are in a measure giving them up to God. Though it may not be our way, it is *God’s* way and it is right. Every time we deny them something they want, for their own good, we are giving them up in a sense. Every time we let them suffer pain and cry, though it be an arrow through our own heart, that they not learn to be selfish, we give them up in a measure to God.

2:1-10 – Hannah’s Praise

*2:4 The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength.
2:5 They that were full have hired out themselves for bread; and they that were hungry ceased:
so that the barren hath born seven; and she that hath many children is waxed feeble.
2:6 The LORD killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up.
2:7 The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich; he bringeth low, and lifteth up.
2:8 He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set
them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the
earth are the LORD's, and he hath set the world upon them.
2:9 He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by
strength shall no man prevail.*

We find here the expression of Hannah's praise. Perhaps she spoke the heart of both she and her husband. It was all about the wonder of her gracious God in his holiness (vs. 2) and awareness of all (vs. 3) and justice and mercy (vs. 4-5, 10) and almighty power over all His creation (vs. 6-8) and His gracious care for His own and their need to depend on Him (vs. 9). Again it is Hannah in communion with the Lord. Consider how high a percentage of the verses describing Hannah in these early chapters speak of her praying and praising. It was such a vital feature of her victorious life. And it is here now in the context of her priceless sacrifice that she expresses the rejoicing of her heart (vs. 1). For somehow it is greatest joy to give our very best for the Lord.

Such godly parents surely continued to pray for young Samuel. And God stepped in to superintend the boy's development in spite of all that seemed lined up against him. Samuel grew up to become

2:10 The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall he thunder upon them: the LORD shall judge the ends of the earth; and he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed.

2:11 And Elkanah went to Ramah to his house. And the child did minister unto the LORD before Eli the priest.

2:12 Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the LORD.

what one writer described as “probably the greatest Old Testament (O.T.) figure since Moses”. He was a man of prayer, who loved and lived and taught God’s Word to his nation for decades.

2:11-17 – Shiloh Situation

We begin to see now not only the ugly situation there at the tabernacle but God’s care of young Samuel in the midst of it. Samuel’s parents had honoured the Lord in giving their son to Him, and God was honouring them in return by keeping their son for Himself, in answer to their prayers. But while the house of Hannah was arising with God’s blessing, Eli’s house was on its way down with God’s curse riding it. This crossing of paths is a key feature of these next few chapters; God giving sons to physically barren Hannah while removing sons from spiritually barren Eli; God speaking to the listening ears of Samuel while turning from the unheeding ears of Eli. The reasons for this are here in chapter 2.

- 2:13 And the priest's custom with the people was, that, when any man offered sacrifice, the priest's servant came, while the flesh was in seething, with a fleshhook of three teeth in his hand;*
- 2:14 And he struck it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; all that the fleshhook brought up the priest took for himself. So they did in Shiloh unto all the Israelites that came thither.*
- 2:15 Also before they burnt the fat, the priest's servant came, and said to the man that sacrificed, Give flesh to roast for the priest; for he will not have sodden flesh of thee, but raw.*
-

Eli's ministering sons were blatantly wicked. Hophni and Phinehas are described in vs. 12 as;

- *"Sons of Belial"* – Expressing the idea of their worthlessness.
- *"They knew not the LORD"* – They had no personal relationship with the God for whom they posed as servants. They, like many "Christians" today, knew of the Lord, but they did not know Him as their own Lord and Saviour from sin.

As well it was the practice of Hophni and Phinehas to steal from God, they being right out in the open about it. As vs. 13-16 describe, there was an allotted portion of certain sacrifices brought by the people which the priests and servants at the tabernacle were free to use for themselves (Lev. 7:30-34; Deut. 18:3). But these sons of Eli simply took whatever cuts they wanted! They were even demanding access to the meat before the fat had

2:16 And if any man said unto him, Let them not fail to burn the fat presently, and then take as much as thy soul desireth; then he would answer him, Nay; but thou shalt give it me now: and if not, I will take it by force.

2:17 Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD: for men abhorred the offering of the LORD.

been burned as a sweet savour to God (Lev. 3:3-5). Thus they were despising God in abusing His offerings, keeping for themselves what was rightfully His. What devout folks were bringing in honour of the Lord, to please the Lord, these scoundrels were taking to please themselves! It would be like a pastor dipping his hand into the offering box, but doing it openly, unconcerned with the impact upon those looking on, scorning all who dared to question his actions. Not only were these men godless, but they were utterly selfish and rude, even violent. By their ungracious actions they were bringing great reproach upon God's name and providing cause for people to avoid God's things, driving them away from His way and place of worship. These men were like many "ministers" in the churches of our day, who are busy about their own carnal interests and godless pursuits rather than the true service of God and men. Nobody can proceed in this manner for long without the Lord taking them out. He had a plan for this lot, as we shall see. But first He was preparing a godly man to step into the gap He would soon create.

God forbid that we by our actions or attitude should ever lead sincere people to abhor God's pure things. As Jesus said, *"But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea"* (Matt. 18:6). Rebels we will never please, and they may very likely have some story of how we have led them to hate God. But all who are truly sincere must only be encouraged to the Lord and His things by our example.

“And all Israel
from Dan even to Beersheba
knew that Samuel
was established
to be a prophet of the LORD”

(1 Sam. 3:20)

Class 3 – I Samuel 2:18-3:21

2:18 But Samuel ministered before the LORD, being a child, girded with a linen ephod.

The prominent theme of this portion is the rise of young Samuel to leadership set against the fall of Eli's house.

2:18-21 – Hannah's Family

Vs. 18 – “*But Samuel ministered before the LORD*” – The “*But*” here is significant, expressing the contrast of Samuel's character with the shocking behaviour of Eli's sons just described. While they were serving themselves Samuel was serving the Lord.

“*Girded with a linen ephod*” – The ephod was originally part of the prescribed clothing for the ministering high priest (Ex. 28:4). It was an ornate vest that draped over the shoulders and was bound at the waist with a girdle or belt. The linen ephod later came to be used by lesser priests and others involved in sacred service. King David wore an ephod while bringing the ark up to Jerusalem (II Sam. 6:14), and we now see the same on young Samuel, though he was not actually of the priestly

2:19 Moreover his mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice.
2:20 And Eli blessed Elkanah and his wife, and said, The LORD give thee seed of this woman for the loan which is lent to the LORD. And they went unto their own home.

line, but a Levite.

Vs. 19 – Hannah’s motherly care of course did not cease with Samuel’s new life at the tabernacle. As the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 she attended to the proper clothing and care of her boy. Those yearly feasts surely took on new meaning for her as she made preparations and yearned with greatest anticipation to see her little son again, and to see how he had grown.

Vs. 20-21 – *“Eli blessed Elkanah and his wife”* – It had been some years since Samuel’s birth, with no further children for Hannah. Yet Eli’s words of blessing, as in 1:17, seemed to carry prophetic power, for again the next verse relates the Lord blessing Hannah with children. How the Lord abounded that godly woman, returning her five children to her joy for the one she gave to Him. Though sacrificial giving is never an easy thing, our God is a far better giver than we could ever be. His returns on our giving for Him are *“good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over”* (Lk. 6:38).

2:21 And the LORD visited Hannah, so that she conceived, and bare three sons and two daughters. And the child Samuel grew before the LORD.

2:22 Now Eli was very old, and heard all that his sons did unto all Israel; and how they lay with the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

“And the child Samuel grew before the LORD” – Several such brief reminders of young Samuel’s life and growth *“before the LORD”* are sprinkled throughout this portion (vs. 11, 18, 26, 3:1). The boy was not only growing to maturity, he was growing to spiritual maturity. The Lord brings to us the situations that grow us as we walk in sincere service for Him, wholly doing His bidding each step of the way. As we make it our habit to choose His will, though it be the hardest thing we have ever done or said, He is able to gradually grow us to spiritual leadership. Both mother and son faced and passed hard tests in the Lord’s school of spiritual growth in this context.

2:22-26 – Eli’s Feeble Reproof

We hear now an example of the ineffectual way Eli attempted to deal with his sons. It was too little and too late. Though his words to them were sound, his admonitions fell on deaf ears, for the Lord was already involved in hardening their hard hearts to their destruction.

Vs. 22 – “*Eli...heard all that his sons did*” – Word came back to Eli such that he was fully aware of all that his sons were doing. As the high priest, he was responsible for all conduct there at the tabernacle. Though it surely would have been hard for him, those “*sons of belial*” should have been dealt with in the way God’s law required. It had come to the point where Hophni and Phinehas were even immorally involved with women who gathered near the tabernacle. Not only should they have been removed from their position as priests, they should have been stoned for their adultery (Deut. 22:22; Lev. 20:10). According to God’s law such “*stubborn and rebellious*” sons were fit to be pushing up daisies (Deut. 21:18-21).

Do you see the difference? Hannah faced the hardest thing she ever had to do for the Lord, and she did it! And for her faithfulness she received God’s blessing, and her house was on its way up to spiritual leadership. Eli faced the hardest imaginable task in removing his godless boys from spiritual leadership, and he would not do it. And for his unfaithfulness his house was on its way out! In chapter 3 young Samuel will face the hard task of bringing the Lord’s message of doom to an old man he loved. What did he do? He did what he must. He did the hard thing. And like mother, like

2:23 *And he said unto them, Why do ye such things? for I hear of your evil dealings by all this people.*

2:24 *Nay, my sons; for it is no good report that I hear: ye make the LORD's people to transgress.*

son. For his faithfulness to God's words young Samuel continued his rise to leadership. Jesus began His public ministry attending to the hard task of purging the temple of commercial corruptions (Jn. 2:15-17). Even so King Solomon in wisdom began his reign attending to the hard tasks David in his permissiveness left unfinished (I Ki. 2), winning God's approving stamp with "*the kingdom... established in the hand of Solomon*" (I Ki. 2:46).

Vs. 23 – "*Why do ye such things?*" – The world runs to the same error of making it a question of "*why*" we do what we do instead of simply a matter of what we do. If it is evil it is evil, regardless of circumstance, motivations, hormones, or other chemicals coursing through our veins. In God's Book "*why*" is largely an irrelevant question, answered quite adequately by Jeremiah 17:9, "*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*"

Vs. 24 – "*Ye make the LORD's people to transgress*" – Because of the presence of those sons, and Eli's weakness to just deal with them in justice, the

2:25 If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the LORD, who shall intreat for him? Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the LORD would slay them.

2:26 And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the LORD, and also with men.

people were led to despise the offering of the Lord (vs. 17) and to leave off what God had commanded of them. Our choice for sin always touches others. Our choice to not deal with sinners for whom we are responsible always touches others as well. If only for the others, if only for the impact on things precious to the Lord, Eli simply could not afford to tolerate such corruptions. It just did not matter how hard it was to do, *he had it to do!* It was either the Lord or his sons, and Eli's vote was for his corrupt sons over his holy God. To adhere to anything earthly over the Lord is a form of idolatry.

Vs. 25 – “*But if a man sin against the LORD*” – God's ancient dealing with Nadab and Abihu was probably in Eli's thinking here (Num. 3:4). Though God does not always deal directly with men as He did with those sons of Aaron at that beginning of a new era, He expects His leaders to take the responsibility for such hard tasks into the age, He having set the tone at the outset.

Vs. 26 – The parallels with the development of young Jesus in Mary's house are obvious (Lk. 2:52).

- 2:27 And there came a man of God unto Eli, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Did I plainly appear unto the house of thy father, when they were in Egypt in Pharaoh's house?*
- 2:28 And did I choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to offer upon mine altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before me? and did I give unto the house of thy father all the offerings made by fire of the children of Israel?*
- 2:29 Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice and at mine offering, which I have commanded in my habitation; and honourest thy sons above me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel my people?*
-

2:27-36 – God’s Faithful Reproof

With Eli’s refusal to do right, God at last sent an unknown man to prophesy the fall of Eli’s house. Again, see the contrast. Here as well was a nameless man willing to do the hard thing for the Lord in bringing a very difficult message of rebuke and ruin to the spiritual leader of the nation.

Vs. 27-28 – God so plainly appeared to His people through Moses and Aaron in bringing His plagues upon Egypt, and He clearly chose Aaron and his descendants to serve as priests over the nation. Eli was in his position by God’s grace and choosing.

Vs. 29 – “*Wherefore kick ye at My sacrifice*” – God’s finger was pointing at Eli here, as well as his sons (“*ye*” is plural). Their wickedness was their fault, with a measure of blame falling upon Eli for not standing in the way in their growing years. But their continued position as wicked priests was all Eli’s! Though Eli might think to excuse himself in a

measure with the thought that he himself was not a part of their evil practices, yet he being responsible and allowing their sin made it his sin as well! As Paul's warning to Timothy implies, to allow into ministry those unfit for such is to *"be partaker of other men's sins"*, failing to *"keep thyself pure"* (I Tim. 5:22). The Lord spoke the summary of it in 3:13, *"Because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not"*. Out of fear or sloth Eli never brought his boys to fear either himself or the Lord.

"And honourest thy sons above Me" – Here was the heart of the issue. Eli was more concerned with preserving his sons than preserving the Lord's integrity. It is the motivation behind all permissive parenting. And the result of such lax leadership was rude and blatant rebellion coupled with flaming sensuality.

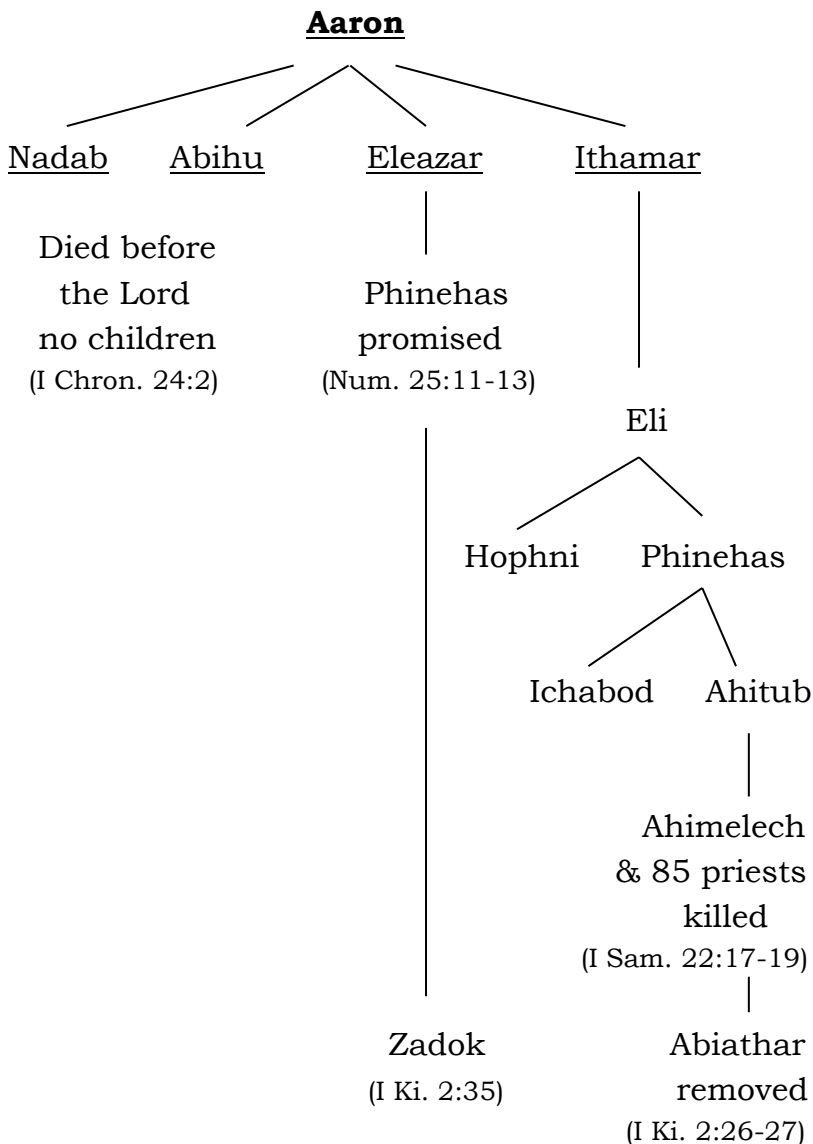
"To make yourselves fat" – This was probably meant in a metaphorical sense, generally referring to their self-serving ways, but perhaps with a physical sense suggested as well. Eli had become obese on the choice cuts his sons demanded of the people (4:18). If you refuse to lovingly but firmly take the lead in guiding your children to godliness, be assured that they will soon be leading you to ungodliness.

2:30 Wherefore the LORD God of Israel saith, I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever: but now the LORD saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.
2:31 Behold, the days come, that I will cut off thine arm, and the arm of thy father's house, that there shall not be an old man in thine house.

Vs. 30-33 – For the sins of Eli’s house God was going to remove from them the priestly office. He would not remove it from Aaron altogether, but from Eli’s line through Ithamar. Here is what God did;

- Hophni & Phinehas were killed (4:11).
- Eli died on the same day (4:18).
- Phinehas’ wife died in child-bearing (4:20).
- The majority of Eli’s descendants (85 men) were later executed by King Saul at the town of Nob (22:17-19).
- Only Abiathar fled to David (22:20-23).
- Abiathar later joined Absalom’s treason against David.
- Solomon replaced Abiathar with Zadok, shifting the priesthood to the line of Eleazar (I Ki. 2).

The complete fulfilment took about 130 years (see diagram of Aaron’s family tree next page).



- 2:32 *And thou shalt see an enemy in my habitation, in all the wealth which God shall give Israel: and there shall not be an old man in thine house for ever.*
- 2:33 *And the man of thine, whom I shall not cut off from mine altar, shall be to consume thine eyes, and to grieve thine heart: and all the increase of thine house shall die in the flower of their age.*
- 2:34 *And this shall be a sign unto thee, that shall come upon thy two sons, on Hophni and Phinehas; in one day they shall die both of them.*
- 2:35 *And I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind: and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before mine anointed for ever.*
-

“Them that honour Me I will honour” – This is spoken as a general principle. The Lord will tend to handle us the way we handle Him and His things. God’s contempt for such feeble-kneed, pampering parenthood, which refuses to bring proper restraint, especially in the context of things sacred to Him, can be seen in the degree of judgment levelled here.

“All the increase of thine house shall die in the flower of their age” – This perhaps refers to the day when King Saul in a rage ordered the death of the priests of Nob.

Vs. 34 – *“This shall be a sign unto thee”* – The affirming sign that all that the Lord said would surely come to pass into the future would be the death of those offending sons *“in one day”*.

Vs. 35 – *“And I will raise me up a faithful priest”* – The fulfilment of this came in Samuel, and then in Zadok, and then ultimately in Jesus Christ, God’s

2:36 And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left in thine house shall come and crouch to him for a piece of silver and a morsel of bread, and shall say, Put me, I pray thee, into one of the priests' offices, that I may eat a piece of bread.
3:1 And the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli. And the word of the LORD was precious in those days; there was no open vision.

faithful High Priest.

Vs. 36 – Not only would Eli's house be put out of the ministry, but they would come to poverty as well.

3:1-21 – Samuel's First Prophecy

Vs. 1 – *"The child Samuel ministered unto the LORD"*
– This is the 5th mention of Samuel in a string of little diamonds glistening against the dark backdrop of Eli's failure. Again the contrast is highlighted in Samuel's rise as Eli falls. Samuel was now perhaps 12 years old or into his early teens. The Hebrew word translated *"child"* here is the same used of young David when he killed Goliath.

"The word of the LORD was precious in those days"
– This is not *"precious"* in the sense of dear, but in the sense of rare. Since the priesthood was so openly corrupt there was very little communication from God in those days. A spiritually dampening effect had passed upon the whole population. Because there were so few willing to hear the Lord He had to find a young boy who was faithful to

3:2 *And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see;*
3:3 *And ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep;*
3:4 *That the LORD called Samuel: and he answered, Here am I.*
3:5 *And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou calledst me. And he said, I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down.*

listen.

Vs. 2 – Eli’s gathering blindness in his old age is stated perhaps to explain Samuel’s ready, running response to his name called in the night, thinking Eli needed some assistance.

Vs. 3 – “*Ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the Lord*” – It was in the early morning hours before sunrise. The golden lampstand burned through the night until the oil was consumed at about sunrise.

Vs. 4-6 – “*The LORD called Samuel*” – Three times the Lord called to young Samuel out of the darkness, sending him to Eli’s bedside thinking the priest had called. It seems it was a voice he could hear with his ear. And obviously it was a male voice, not that of a woman, for it sent him to Eli’s bedside. It seems Eli’s sleeping place was close to Samuel’s. And it may be that Samuel was accustomed to being called in the night in caring for the old man. Samuel

3:6 *And the LORD called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And he answered, I called not, my son; lie down again.*
3:7 *Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, neither was the word of the LORD yet revealed unto him.*
3:8 *And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And Eli perceived that the LORD had called the child.*

being the kind of boy he was, he hurried to Eli's side as soon as he was called.

Vs. 7 – “*Samuel did not yet know the LORD*” – It is not that Samuel was without any knowledge of God. In contrast to Eli's sons (2:12), Samuel knew of the true God and worshipped Him, his life of servanthood displaying the genuineness of his commitment. But he was not accustomed to God communicating directly and personally with him in this way.

Vs. 8 – “*Eli perceived that the LORD had called the child*” – At last with the 3rd call it dawned on Eli that it was the Lord calling to Samuel. Now do you not suppose the Lord could easily have made it evident to Samuel that it was He who was speaking, without this amusing yo-yo process involving Eli? Of course He could. Others to whom the Lord spoke in the Bible did not have such problems recognizing the Speaker. The Lord knew that Samuel would mistake His voice for Eli's. So why do you suppose He involved Eli in this interesting way? Two

3:9 *Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, LORD; for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place.*

reasons;

- The Lord wanted Eli to know that Samuel was receiving a message from Him, because the message was actually for Eli. But the Lord could not speak to Eli, for he would not listen and take to heart what was said.
- He wanted Eli to do just what he did in the morning light, to demand to hear the message. Eli's awareness and interest was necessary because of the nature of the message, for it would not be an easy one for Samuel to reveal (vs. 15). It was Samuel's first test to see if he would speak honestly, with courage revealing all that the Lord had told him to speak, difficult though it might be. It was the first really hard thing the Lord called upon young Samuel to do. If he passed the test, there would be other such tasks in the Lord's service.

Even so our God often puts the test before us to see if we are willing to speak His difficult messages.

Vs. 9-10 – *“Speak; for thy servant heareth”* – It is

3:10 And the LORD came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth.

interesting to hear Eli's instructions to Samuel on the proper way to respond to the Lord. The Hebrew word translated "*heareth*" is not merely a passive listening but expresses an active attention with a will to obey. It seems Eli was able to instruct others on how to do what he himself had long since left off doing. The very reason for the Lord's involving of Samuel here was because Eli had grown unreceptive to His words. It was shades of Balaam's refusal to listen to God, thus the need to speak to him through the donkey. Eli was like many Christians today who know what they should do in relation to the Lord and can easily counsel others on how to walk in the light of God's presence, but they themselves do not actually walk there. They *know* the way there but they do not *go* the way there, for they prefer darker ways inconsistent with the light of God's pleasure. Behold Eli brought to ruin in this manner.

Did you notice that Samuel left out the name of Jehovah in his response? (compare vs. 9 & 10). He still was not sure. So he spoke to the darkness, "Speak, whoever you are, if you really are the LORD". Samuel was so much the opposite of Eli.

Though he did not know outwardly the way to respond to the Lord in his inexperienced, child-like simplicity, yet inwardly there was a receptive willingness to hear the Lord. *It was all the difference!* It is what made him great.

Many are there who know how to wear
The outward facade of relation to God.

Few there are, much rarer by far,
Those who truly abide and walk by His side.

The outward forms and experience, for what they are worth, would come to Samuel with time, but the inward heart of a willingness before God was the vital issue, making him a useable young man. Eli recognized the Lord's voice but would not hear it. Samuel did not recognize the Lord's voice but would hear it. The difference, though it may seem small to the world, is *absolutely immeasurable!* Outward savvy and religious polish and eloquent prayers are like worthless dust compared to the *gold dust* of a willing, servant heart before God. Beware the danger of empty eloquence. It is ever Satan's mission to wean us from warmth and leech out our longing for God's pleasure.

Vs. 11-14 – The Lord spoke to Samuel what He had already told Eli, that His judgment would certainly

- 3:11 And the LORD said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle.*
- 3:12 In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin, I will also make an end.*
- 3:13 For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.*
- 3:14 And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever.*
- 3:15 And Samuel lay until the morning, and opened the doors of the house of the LORD. And Samuel feared to shew Eli the vision.*
-

fall upon Eli's house, because he knew where the Lord stood on the corruption of his sons, but he would not do anything about it. It was like spiritual leadership aware of unrepentant evil in a church member yet refusing to take appropriate steps.

Vs. 15-17 – *“Samuel lay until the morning”* – There was no more sleep for the boy with the heartache of such painful words burning within him. The last thing in the world he wanted to do was to reveal such things to Eli. Yet it was the very thing Eli immediately demanded of him, insisting upon hearing *all* of it. It was the Lord using circumstances in training Samuel to speak fully and faithfully as He would have him to speak.

Eli is the one who is difficult to figure. Why was he so keen to know all that the Lord had spoken? He had not shown himself a listener. Why so hot to hear it all if he would not heed at all?

3:16 Then Eli called Samuel, and said, Samuel, my son. And he answered, Here am I.
3:17 And he said, What is the thing that the LORD hath said unto thee? I pray thee hide it not from me: God do so to thee, and more also, if thou hide any thing from me of all the things that he said unto thee.
3:18 And Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him. And he said, It is the LORD: let him do what seemeth him good.

Vs. 18 – “*Samuel told him every whit*” – Samuel showed himself strong to do with complete honesty what his heavenly and earthly authorities called upon him to do, speaking fully what must have hurt him deeply.

“*It is the LORD: let Him do what seemeth Him good*” – Commentators tend to extol the virtues of Eli’s gracious resignation here, so easily accepting the Lord’s will, though such troubling news. But could words such as “apathy” or “indifference” perhaps be a better fit? When King Hezekiah heard that he would soon die the Lord relented when the king pled and cried before Him. When King Josiah recognized how far the nation was from God’s will and that His cannons of divine judgment were even then trained upon them, he tore his clothes in genuine repentance and began immediate, sweeping reforms. And so God assured Josiah that his eyes would “*not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place*” (II Ki. 22:10-20). When the people of Nineveh heard of God’s soon and certain judgment they repented in dust and ashes, thus turning God’s heart. But

3:19 And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground.

3:20 And all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the LORD.

3:21 And the LORD appeared again in Shiloh: for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the LORD.

where are Eli's tears or torn clothes? Where his repentance? Where the concern that his sinful softness would impact the future of his entire family line?

Vs. 19-21 – We come out the end of this chapter with again the focus on the rising star of young Samuel. It seems these good words of growing reputation and ministry are in direct response to his faithfulness in carrying God's rebuke to Eli. Samuel passed the test, and with a flourish God began to use him more fully.

“And did let none of his words fall to the ground” – Nothing failed to come to pass of all that Samuel spoke in prophecy. It is the proof of a true prophet of God (Deut. 18:22) and a reputation Samuel carried throughout his days (9:6).

“The LORD appeared again in Shiloh” – It was a fresh new era dawning when the Lord was able to reveal Himself again, through a man who was willing to be faithful.

Class 4 – I Samuel 4-5

4:1 And the word of Samuel came to all Israel. Now Israel went out against the Philistines to battle, and pitched beside Ebenezer: and the Philistines pitched in Aphek.

4:1-11 – Ark Captured

Vs. 1 – “*And the word of Samuel came to all Israel*” – Trace Samuel’s progress while still young;

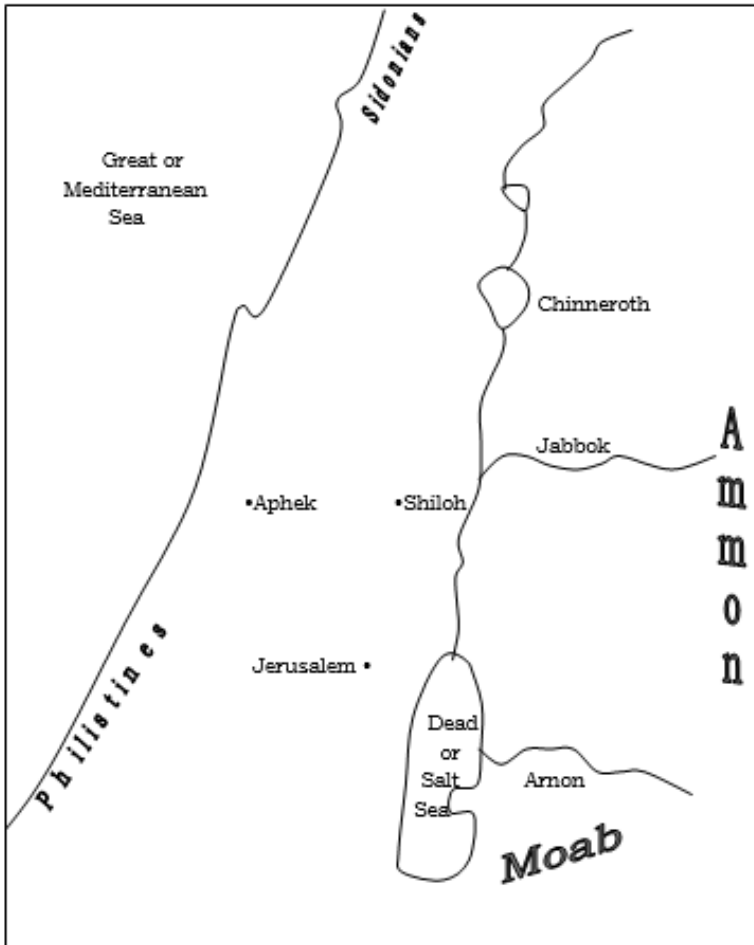
- He knew God’s presence with him (3:19).
- His words were true and trustworthy (3:19).
- He became widely known as God’s prophet (3:20).
- He began receiving God’s special revelation (3:21).
- His words became widely known (4:1).

It is God’s process of lifting to prominence a vessel He can use.

“*Israel went out against the Philistines to battle*” – It was the Philistines making war with Israel, bringing the nation out to their own defence. Yet it was God doing just as we read in 3:19, creating the circumstance whereby He would begin to fulfil His

words. And when He began, He made a swift, sudden, and complete end. Yes, it was all of the tragedy of war. But it was God! Could we agree even in war that *“all things work together for good to them that love God”*?

The Philistines are referred to in ancient writings as the “sea people”. It seems they were driven from the islands of the Aegean by the Greeks before settling along the southern coast of Palestine. When the Lord spoke of their appearance in Palestine He said *“I brought...the Philistines from Caphtor”* (Amos 9:7). They were brought over by the Lord for His purpose, as a tool of testing and rod of rebuke for His children, becoming Israel’s main enemy from the days of Samson until David’s time. The land of Philistia was ruled by the *“five lords of the Philistines”* (Judges 3:3), ruling from their five main cities of Ashdod, Gath, Ekron, Ashkelon, and Gaza. Though they worshipped other gods, their main god was Dagon (I Chron. 10:10). The name seems to come either from the Hebrew word *dag* meaning “fish” or *dagan* meaning “grain”. Apparently Dagon was a fertility god, somewhat like Baal, represented it is believed by an idol with human head and arms yet with the body and tail of a fish, as found on a palace wall at Babylon.



This battle took place at Aphek about 35 kms due west of Shiloh out toward the coast, where the central hill country begins to level out to the coastal plain.

Vs. 2 – In their first engagement 4,000 men of Israel

4:2 *And the Philistines put themselves in array against Israel: and when they joined battle, Israel was smitten before the Philistines: and they slew of the army in the field about four thousand men.*

4:3 *And when the people were come into the camp, the elders of Israel said, Wherefore hath the LORD smitten us to day before the Philistines? Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies.*

were killed. It was one of those situations that led the nation to believe they needed a king to lead them, foolishly thinking military victory comes of greater organization, forgetting that *“the horse is prepared against the day of battle: but safety [victory] is of the LORD”* (Prov. 21:31). It was the missing element here. The message they should have received from this loss was that their God was not fighting with them, for He was displeased with their sinful way. It should have sent them to Him, repenting and pleading for His mercy and direction. It should have sent them to Samuel the prophet to hear a word from their God rather than to Eli to collect the ark.

Vs. 3 – *“Wherefore hath the Lord smitten us to day?”*
– It was a very good question the leaders asked in their evening council meeting. The problem was they only asked it of each other! They recognized the Lord’s involvement in the ugly outcome of the battle, for it was part of God’s promised curse for waywardness that His people would run before their

enemies (Deut. 28:25), but never did they put the question to *Him!* Compare in 7:8 the difference that later developed through the godly influence of Samuel. Yet at this point see how they proposed to bring God into their endeavour through the presence of a religious relic rather than crying in dependence upon Him. It is indication of their apostasy. They actually ascribed power to the ark of the Lord rather than to the Lord of the ark, which was really a form of idolatry. Not only did “*it*” not save the nation, “*it*” did not even save itself (5:1). It was the Lord allowing an outcome that would serve to teach both His people and the nations important lessons concerning Himself.

All superstition is the same, ascribing supernatural power to some item or sequence or incantation, etc. It is the one who thinks he will have God’s blessing in his trip or business or other endeavour if he has some pendant hanging or some picture propped or some charm nailed to the door. It is the sportsman who thinks he has a better chance on the field if wearing some particular hat or shirt or armband. These are actions or items sometimes passed off as “tradition”. But it is superstition in the place of relation and communication with the only true God. What about the common Christian thought that success is more likely if a certain person prays or if

4:4 So the people sent to Shiloh, that they might bring from thence the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth between the cherubims: and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God.

4:5 And when the ark of the covenant of the LORD came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again.

a larger number of people pray? Could this perhaps be another example of sanctified superstition?

Vs. 4 – “*So the people sent to Shiloh*” – It was the people running according to their religious ignorance, but where was Eli to put a stop to such nonsense? Was it not the very thing he was meant to be, God’s goad and guide in such matters? Eli either was not sure enough of the truth himself or too weak to fight the issue when the leaders and army were earnestly looking to the ark for victory. What a time to stand in the way! Do we not see here a reflection of the same weakness we have seen before in Eli? He refused to demand what was right here, just as he had at the tabernacle with his sons. As in the home, so in the church. It is why the Lord requires of pastors that their home be in order (I Tim. 3:4-5). And look well how it was Eli’s failure to effectively lead that was the end of him!

Vs. 5 – Eli’s sons must have done a hard march through the night to get the ark to Ebenezer by morning light. The attitude of all was that the

4:6 And when the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they said, What meaneth the noise of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews? And they understood that the ark of the LORD was come into the camp.

4:7 And the Philistines were afraid, for they said, God is come into the camp. And they said, Woe unto us! for there hath not been such a thing heretofore.

presence of the ark would make all the difference.

Vs. 6-9 – “*When the Philistines heard the noise of the shout*” – So great was Israel’s jubilation that their combined shout was heard over in the camp of the Philistines, stirring great fear among them when their spies brought word that the ark had arrived.

“*God is come into the camp*” – While the Israelites looked upon the ark in a superstitious sense, ascribing power to the item, the Philistines saw it in an idolatrous sense, as the visible representation of Israel’s God. On both sides of the skirmish line there was a failure to recognize the omnipotence and omnipresence of the true God, that He is all powerful and that He is present everywhere (Ps. 139:7-10). “*Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the LORD*” (Jer. 23:24). Though the ark did tend to represent the particular presence of God, yet the God of all creation cannot be confined to a box. And no special presence or representation of the Lord is necessary for Him to do anything, at any time, anywhere on earth for those who call on Him in

4:8 Woe unto us! who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty Gods? these are the Gods that smote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness.
4:9 Be strong and quit yourselves like men, O ye Philistines, that ye be not servants unto the Hebrews, as they have been to you: quit yourselves like men, and fight.
4:10 And the Philistines fought, and Israel was smitten, and they fled every man into his tent: and there was a very great slaughter; for there fell of Israel thirty thousand footmen.

truth.

“*Woe unto us!*” – So great was the Philistine fear that we twice read of their woe pronounced upon themselves. Their fear came of what they had heard of God’s dealings centuries before in Egypt. Note how the Philistines were more inclined to tremble before the true God than were His own people. Compare the same in the sailors and Ninevites in contrast to Jonah. But rather than the blow to their confidence scattering them in fear as it might have done, the Lord so worked in them that they were only moved to greater determination in the fight. Again, it was an unnatural response. It was God lifting them to His purpose.

Vs. 10 – “*And Israel was smitten*” – So matter-of-factly Israel’s defeat is reported. So easily the Philistines got the victory. As if Israel’s failure was a forgone conclusion under the circumstances. And the outcome could scarcely have been worse, with a “*very great slaughter*”, the ministering priests killed, and the ark actually taken by the Philistines as a

*4:11 And the ark of God was taken; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were slain.
4:12 And there ran a man of Benjamin out of the army, and came to Shiloh the same day
with his clothes rent, and with earth upon his head.
4:13 And when he came, lo, Eli sat upon a seat by the wayside watching: for his heart trembled
for the ark of God. And when the man came into the city, and told it, all the city cried out.*

trophy! God was willing to allow the appearance for a time that false gods were actually stronger than He. He was willing to share a measure of Israel's disgrace for the sake of a greater work among His people. Yet the real reasons for this "tragic" result are expressed in Psalm 78:55-66. Not God's weakness but man's sin.

Vs. 11 – *"And the two sons of Eli...were slain"* – It was the very sign the unnamed *"man of God"* had given to Eli, affirming that God would do all He had threatened (2:34). Oh He did it, and so much more!

4:12-18 – Eli's Death

Vs. 12 – Shiloh was the central city of the nation in those days when the Lord and the tabernacle were at the heart of things, before they had a human king with the nation focused around him. And so to Shiloh the messenger went wearing visible signs of great mourning.

Vs. 13-14 – *"Eli sat upon a seat by the wayside"*

4:14 And when Eli heard the noise of the crying, he said, What meaneth the noise of this tumult? And the man came in hastily, and told Eli.

4:15 Now Eli was ninety and eight years old; and his eyes were dim, that he could not see.

watching” – Eli was anxiously awaiting news of the battle. Surely he knew in his heart that he should never have let the ark be used in this way. Therefore his greatest anxiety. Eli was a good man with good and godly concerns, though so very weak in his leadership. See him seated there wringing his hands in anguish over the welfare of his people and of the ark of the Lord. When we do right, though it be the hardest thing to do and makes enemies in doing it, yet still we enjoy the peace of God’s presence. When we do wrong, choosing the “easy way” of least resistance, because it is just too hard to do right, we must endure the *harder* way of living with a troubled heart and other bitter fruits of our evil choices.

The messenger did not carry word directly to Eli as we might expect. Perhaps because the bitter news would be bitterest to Eli. Perhaps because Eli did not act the leader in making the hard decisions he should and thus he was not considered or honoured as leader in the crunch. If we would be treated as a leader we must lead.

- 4:16 And the man said unto Eli, I am he that came out of the army, and I fled to day out of the army. And he said, What is there done, my son?*
- 4:17 And the messenger answered and said, Israel is fled before the Philistines, and there hath been also a great slaughter among the people, and thy two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God is taken.*
- 4:18 And it came to pass, when he made mention of the ark of God, that he fell from off the seat backward by the side of the gate, and his neck brake, and he died: for he was an old man, and heavy. And he had judged Israel forty years.*
-

Vs. 16-17 – The soldier was repeating himself, perhaps wishing to be anywhere else, not wanting to tell Eli what he must tell him.

“What is there done, my son?” – Eli was as demanding of the facts with this man as he had been with young Samuel (3:17). To his credit, Eli was a man unwilling to hide anything from himself, but wished to proceed with full awareness of reality, painful though it might be. The soldier’s report was brief, complete, and *devastating!* He saved the worst for last but held nothing back.

Vs. 18 – *“When he made mention of the ark of God”* – Even though the sad news included the death of Eli’s own boys, it seems the worst of it for him was the captured ark. It is interesting to note the attitude of people toward a man displayed at the time of his death. Folks might tend to enjoy a godless leader who allows them to run to the same godlessness. And a nation might tend to resent a godly leader who stands in the way of their free run

to their pleasures. But they cannot help but respect the latter and despise the former. Every man knows in his heart of hearts what is good and right for him, even though he may not make such choices for himself. And every man knows that it is the one who pushes him to do right who really cares. See how godly kings like Hezekiah and Josiah were greatly honoured in their death (II Chron. 32:33; 35:24-25), though their sweeping reforms spoiled the pleasures and preferences of many and met with much resistance. Yet compare how evil kings like Manasseh and Ahab were little missed or honoured in their death (I Ki. 22:37-38). Though Hophni & Phinehas were Eli's own flesh and blood, they were wicked sons. Therefore the ark was a far greater loss, even for Eli. And we are left with not the least record of mourning in their death. *"Their priests fell by the sword; and their widows made no lamentation"* (Ps. 78:64). As well, there could not have been a surer sign of God's displeasure upon His people than the ark missing from the tabernacle. It signified the reality of their *God* absent from the tabernacle.

"He fell from off the seat backward" – The news was so devastating that Eli collapsed and went right over off the back of his seat onto his head. Being *"an old man"* and over-weight his neck was broken with the

4:19 And his daughter in law, Phinehas' wife, was with child, near to be delivered: and when she heard the tidings that the ark of God was taken, and that her father in law and her husband were dead, she bowed herself and travailed; for her pains came upon her.

4:20 And about the time of her death the women that stood by her said unto her, Fear not; for thou hast born a son. But she answered not, neither did she regard it.

fall and he was dead, adding tragedy to tragedy.

4:19-22 – Ichabod

Vs. 19 – *“She bowed herself and travailed”* – The news then came to the wife of Phinehas, who was at that time near the end of her term of pregnancy. And again the tragic word had a physical effect upon her as well, sending her immediately into labour.

Vs. 20 – *“And about the time of her death”* – Though we are not given the reasons why, we discover that this nameless woman died in giving birth. Her tragic death joins with the tens of thousands dead on the battlefield that day as a testimony to the folly of offending God and esteeming things He holds dear to be of small concern. The innocent died with the guilty that day, as is so often true. It is a truth that adds weight to God’s command to do right. This poor woman died in despair, not even caring that she had given birth to a son for the losses sustained by her people. God pointed the finger of blame at Eli for this dark day in the nation’s history,

4:21 *And she named the child Ichabod, saying, The glory is departed from Israel: because the ark of God was taken, and because of her father in law and her husband.*

4:22 *And she said, The glory is departed from Israel: for the ark of God is taken.*

for not being the strong leader he should have been in preserving the integrity of the tabernacle worship. This he sacrificed for the preservation of his sons. And in God's justice Eli lost his sons before his own death anyway.

Vs. 21-22 – “*She named the child Ichabod*” – This well-known name means “no glory” or “where is the glory”, for all was lost to this poor dying woman with “*the glory...departed from Israel*”. She was perhaps thinking of Exodus 40, of the day when Moses finished putting all things right in the tabernacle “*as the LORD had commanded Moses*”, with the amazing result that “*the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle*” (vs. 34). Now the loss of the ark, symbolizing the departure of the Lord in His glory, only served to confirm what she already knew to be true, that things were no longer right at the tabernacle, but very, very wrong.

It is evident here that she named her son mainly for the glory lost in the captured ark of God (vs. 22). Again, as with Eli, this was a more significant loss to her even than her dead husband, a man she

5:1 *And the Philistines took the ark of God, and brought it from Ebenezer unto Ashdod.*

5:2 *When the Philistines took the ark of God, they brought it into the house of Dagon, and set it by Dagon.*

certainly would have known to be wicked, as did all Israel. She is not the only Bible example of a wife who was more sensitive to spiritual things than her husband, though Phinehas was a priest. Compare the parents of Samson and John the Baptist. For Phinehas God's things were expendable, while for his wife they were indispensable! Even the knowledge that she had given birth to a healthy son did not touch her. As she died we seem to hear her numbly repeating the words of the text here, *"The glory is departed from Israel...the glory is departed from Israel!"* Here was Israel's very lowest point before the nation's turning through the leadership of godly Samuel. It was the darkest hour just before the dawning.

5:1-12 – Philistine Hot Potato

Vs. 1-2 – *"The Philistines took the ark of God...and set it by Dagon"* – The first stop for the captured ark was the Philistine city of Ashdod. After carrying their trophy triumphantly through the city streets amidst great celebration the ark was placed in the temple of Dagon. The purpose was the same as

5:3 *And when they of Ashdod arose early on the morrow, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the earth before the ark of the LORD. And they took Dagon, and set him in his place again.*

when Nebuchadnezzar carried all the temple vessels to Babylon and placed them in *“the house of his god”* (Dan. 1:2). It was to show their gods greater than Israel’s God, with the ark of God placed at the feet of their victorious deity.

Vs. 3 – *“Dagon was fallen upon his face to the earth”* – Ah the humour of this account is a wonderful thing. Upon rising in the morning the Philistine priests found their idol fallen to the ground before the ark, and on its face as if in an attitude of humble prostration. Can you picture God’s angels having fun with that one during the night? And now, what is the proper procedure when one finds his god fallen from his pedestal? What else? We pick him up! Could they leave him on his sacred face? Could they worship him or pray to him there?

“And they took Dagon, and set him in his place again” – Did their sacred writings cover that one or prescribe the proper way to go about doing this? Our God has power to create all things from nothing. Their god needed men to pick him up off his face, the poor thing! When you have to pick up

5:4 And when they arose early on the morrow morning, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the ground before the ark of the LORD; and the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands were cut off upon the threshold; only the stump of Dagon was left to him.

your god with your hands something should be happening in your heart! And did they perhaps scold the naughty ark at the same time? As if in mockery Dagon is ascribed personhood (“*him... his*”). But alas, an even more discouraging scene met them the next morning.

Vs. 4 – “*Only the stump of Dagon was left to him*” – Not only was their god again fallen prostrate before the ark, but now the head and hands of the idol were broken off (it seems God removed the human parts from the fishy parts). Now it was necessary to make a new idol or perhaps to glue this one back together. Though the Lord would not fight in behalf of His wayward people He would not allow Himself to be mocked by pagans either. Remember how Babylon’s end came when God’s vessels were used in a drunken feast in praise of “*the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone. And in the same hour...*” (Dan. 5:4-5).

Lord Dagon did not come off very well the last time he appeared in the Bible either. It was to make a great sacrifice to Dagon that all the Philistine lords

5:5 *Therefore neither the priests of Dagon, nor any that come into Dagon's house, tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod unto this day.*

5:6 *But the hand of the LORD was heavy upon them of Ashdod, and he destroyed them, and smote them with emerods, even Ashdod and the coasts thereof.*

were gathered when Samson brought the house down on their heads (Judges 16:23). Little did those lofty lords know that *they* were to be the sacrifice that day. They were rejoicing there that their god had delivered Samson into their hands. But their god did not deliver them *from* Samson there! It only takes a few brain cells to recognize that it was more like their god delivered them into Samson's hands than he into theirs. Would it not seem to be the height of folly to still be trusting a god of such treachery or weakness or both?

Vs. 5 – Consider how this ridiculous tradition in Ashdod conducted in honour of their fallen deity was at the same time a continual admission of the greater power of the true and living God of Israel.

Vs. 6 – “*He destroyed them and smote them with emerods*” – The details of what this involved are unclear. We do know that this disease God sent upon the Philistines;

- Was deadly (vs. 11).
- Brought “*very great destruction*” (vs. 9). God

5:7 *And when the men of Ashdod saw that it was so, they said, The ark of the God of Israel shall not abide with us: for his hand is sore upon us, and upon Dagon our god.*

was doing just fine on His own in accomplishing what Israel's army could not.

- Caused “*emerods*” on their bodies. The Hebrew behind “*emerods*” comes of the verb meaning to swell. The noun form is used of a hill, or here of some type of nasty tumorous growths or boils, especially upon their “*secret*” or private parts. “*He smote His enemies in the hinder parts: He put them to a perpetual reproach*” (Ps. 78:66).
- With the indication of mice or rats involved as well (6:4-5) some have suggested a bubonic plague type disease involving tumours and spread by rats.

Vs. 7 – “*His hand is sore upon us, and upon Dagon our god*” – Shame! God was getting pretty rough with their dear little deity, and so they must now rise up in his defence. One can understand the priests wishing to preserve the facade of their god, for it was the way they made their living. We might expect that such religious leaders sought to hide as much of this as possible from the public. But so much of what happened across their land was

5:8 They sent therefore and gathered all the lords of the Philistines unto them, and said, What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel? And they answered, Let the ark of the God of Israel be carried about unto Gath. And they carried the ark of the God of Israel about thither.

5:9 And it was so, that, after they had carried it about, the hand of the LORD was against the city with a very great destruction: and he smote the men of the city, both small and great, and they had emerods in their secret parts.

5:10 Therefore they sent the ark of God to Ekron. And it came to pass, as the ark of God came to Ekron, that the Ekronites cried out, saying, They have brought about the ark of the God of Israel to us, to slay us and our people.

impossible to hide from the people. Where were the bright Philistines to see this? Surely there must have been a Nicodemus, Rahab, or Ruth here and there among them wise enough to see the truth of their hollow god here.

See how this situation was just as it had been with Samson. What they thought to be greatest victory and joy was so suddenly turned to their greatest loss and shame, because their actions were against the Lord God of heaven. Whenever we act against God in pursuit of what we wish to enjoy it will surely turn to our sorrow and loss as well in time.

Vs. 8-10 – The first national meeting of the Philistine lords resulted in the ark shifted to the city of Gath. But the same “*very great destruction*” arrived there with the ark, and so it was quickly shifted to the city of Ekron. But with the ark’s reputation preceding it the people of Ekron were already protesting as it arrived, that death was being carried to their city.

5:11 *So they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines, and said, Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it go again to his own place, that it slay us not, and our people: for there was a deadly destruction throughout all the city; the hand of God was very heavy there.*

5:12 *And the men that died not were smitten with the emerods: and the cry of the city went up to heaven.*

The whole nation was in upheaval over this.

Vs. 11 – At the second meeting of the lords the decision was hastily made to “*send away the ark of the god of Israel, and let it go again to his own place*”.

Vs. 12 – “*And the cry of the city went up to heaven*” – It is a reminder of Jonah’s sailors forced to cry to heaven in the failure of their powerless gods and in recognition of the greater power of the true and living God. The people of earth are still given to observing and trusting the false gods of their “*lying vanities*”, thus forsaking “*their own mercy*” (Jonah 2:8). Therefore the Lord still finds it necessary to resort to such measures upon occasion. When in our pursuit of our own will and way the Lord turns our delights to destruction, it is time to recognize what these people refused to see.

“Then Samuel took a stone,
and set it between
Mizpeh and Shen,
and called the name of it Ebenezer,
saying, Hitherto
hath the LORD helped us”

(1 Sam. 7:12)

Class 5 – I Samuel 6-7

6:1 *And the ark of the LORD was in the country of the Philistines seven months.*

6:1-9 – Counsel for Ark's Return

Vs. 1 – In spite of their ongoing tragedy there was an understandable reluctance among the Philistine lords to admit defeat, or worse, the powerlessness of their gods before another god. Pride stubbornly holds to what it has and to what is familiar, even in the face of greatest pain and loss, insisting it can sort out its own troubles. Thus there was an obvious resistance among them to release their trophy, and after 7 months they were still in possession of the ark. The question of possible coincidence would likely have been a consideration among them. Maybe this all just *happened* to come upon them at this particular time. Perhaps if they could wait it out and weather the storm their troubles would work themselves out and they could keep their prize with their pride. It is likely that there was a good bit of debate and difference of opinion among them as to whether the ark or the God of it was really the problem. But alas, there was no relief! Trouble and terror followed that ark, and they had finally come now to the point where

- 6:2 And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners, saying, What shall we do to the ark of the LORD? tell us wherewith we shall send it to his place.*
- 6:3 And they said, If ye send away the ark of the God of Israel, send it not empty; but in any wise return him a trespass offering: then ye shall be healed, and it shall be known to you why his hand is not removed from you.*
-

they were looking to make the transfer. It is amazing the suffering to which pride will lead us and hold us. Pharaoh had stubbornly refused to let God's people go until he and his nation were left with death and destruction on every hand.

Vs. 2 – “*What shall we do to the ark of the LORD?*” – We saw two earnest meetings among the Philistines in chapter 5, seeking what to do with the troublesome ark, with the decision made there to send it back across the border. Now the question of *how* to actually do it was put to the Philistine priests. Being men of religion, it was presumed they knew best how to handle such matters. Their counsel was largely foolishness, but their method did provide the Lord with further opportunity to confirm His power and reality. Though men of religion they were men of false religion and therefore ignorant of how to handle the Lord's things in wisdom. Even so the same it is true today. Those of false and faithless religion simply do not have eyes to see what pleases the Lord.

6:4 Then said they, What shall be the trespass offering which we shall return to him? They answered, Five golden emerods, and five golden mice, according to the number of the lords of the Philistines: for one plague was on you all, and on your lords.

Vs. 3 – “Return Him a trespass offering” – What would be the significance of such an offering, except as an admission of trespass or error? By this they were acknowledging their wrong and pleading for pardon. They must not come grudgingly but with a gift in humility.

“Then shall ye be healed” – So it is evident that they were still suffering. There is an admission here that they could not know healing without the Lord, by their god alone. It was a similar situation to Elijah’s challenge to King Ahab concerning Baal, that there would be no rain, of which Baal was the imagined lord, until the true God of heaven allowed it through His prophet. Compare the holy men of Egypt and Babylon, who also came to embarrassment before the true God, again providing opportunity for God to reveal Himself and His man.

Vs. 4 – The nature of the mice involvement is an unknown. Again, perhaps it was understood by them that mice or rats were carriers of some type of plague (as bubonic plague, causing buboes or the inflamed swelling of glands, particularly in the groin

6:5 *Wherefore ye shall make images of your emerods, and images of your mice that mar the land; and ye shall give glory unto the God of Israel: peradventure he will lighten his hand from off you, and from off your gods, and from off your land.*

and armpits). Or it may be that an outbreak of mice ravaging the fields was a second concern they faced at the same time.

Vs. 5 – *“Ye shall make images of your emerods, and images of your mice”* – Golden images of their grievances seem to have been like a specific request sent to pinpoint that for which they were asking relief. They understood that when God was so dealing with them it was time to seek His favour rather than continuing to resist, as did Pharaoh.

“Ye shall give glory unto the God of Israel” – They readily acknowledged that it was God’s hand upon them and that it was the true God to whom glory was due. Perhaps their priests were more ready to recognize this than their leaders. It is likely that they were not yet ready to admit that glory was due to God *alone*. They would hold to their gods while admitting that the Lord had the upper hand in this one for some strange reason. But that they could see God’s hand heavy upon their gods as well could only indicate a greater God, if they were willing to see it. Compare 5:6, 9, 11.

6:6 *Wherefore then do ye harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? when he had wrought wonderfully among them, did they not let the people go, and they departed?*

That God's hand was heavy upon their *land* as well as upon their people and gods may suggest that the work of the mice was rather in the fields in destroying their crops. God often compounds difficulties when the need arises, bringing trouble from many directions at once. Compare Solomon's experience once he turned from the Lord in I Kings 11. Compare South Africa's multiplied woes of accelerating crime, disease, poverty, and graft for our national denial of God's truth. And yet still pride insists that with our combined efforts we can sort out our own problems, by throwing programmes and money at it. The last thing proud man wants to do is turn to God for His answers.

Vs. 6 – *“Wherefore then do ye harden your hearts?”*
– The priests' question suggests some things;

- The ark remaining for 7 months was due to their stubborn insistence upon their own way, perhaps the proud leaders particularly, as Pharaoh. Thus the tumours were upon them as well, even as God's plagues upon Egypt got more and more personal, touching Pharaoh as well (Ex. 8:31; 12:29).

6:7 Now therefore make a new cart, and take two milch kine, on which there hath come no yoke, and tie the kine to the cart, and bring their calves home from them:
6:8 And take the ark of the LORD, and lay it upon the cart; and put the jewels of gold, which ye return him for a trespass offering, in a coffer by the side thereof; and send it away, that it may go.
6:9 And see, if it goeth up by the way of his own coast to Bethshemesh, then he hath done us this great evil: but if not, then we shall know that it is not his hand that smote us: it was a chance that happened to us.

- These Philistines knew fully well what had happened in Egypt. God's power was known and remembered for centuries. They must have been passing from generation to generation some knowledge of God as well as their own sacred lore. Even so the world is still aware of God's power in some measure.

Vs. 7 – *“Make a new cart”* – It must be a vehicle undefiled in any way, without anything that might offend. This was a token of respect or honour.

“Take two milch kine” – The “kine” or cows were introduced as a test to affirm to all that it was indeed God bringing the plague and not happenstance. This was a kind of fleece for the sake of all doubters. They were “*milch*” cows in that they were currently nursing calves and thus would naturally be wanting to stay with their calves. So part of the test was that their young must be separated from them. The cows must be untrained, unfamiliar with a yoke. Two unbroken cows yoked

6:10 And the men did so; and took two milch kine, and tied them to the cart, and shut up their calves at home:

6:11 And they laid the ark of the LORD upon the cart, and the coffer with the mice of gold and the images of their emerods.

6:12 And the kine took the straight way to the way of Bethshemesh, and went along the highway, lowing as they went, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left; and the lords of the Philistines went after them unto the border of Bethshemesh.

together would tend to put their strength against each other to confusion, for domestic animals must be taught to pull together in a yoke. So these cows must go untrained, unwilling, unled, and uphill. If they would leave their nursing young and head straight to the border it would be clear indication of God's supernatural power guiding them. Compare Christ's ride into Jerusalem on the unbroken colt and the ravens that fed Elijah. Here was an opportunity for the Lord to show His power over His creation.

6:10-18 – Ark Returned

Vs. 12 – *“The kine took the straight way”* – The Lord honoured their programme. The bellowing of the cows as they went indicated their displeasure with their direction, yet their straight course pointed to a greater power leading them. Oh the grace of God that He would take the ark, that token of His presence, back to His wayward people, that He would wish to be with them!

- 6:13 And they of Bethshemesh were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley: and they lifted up their eyes, and saw the ark, and rejoiced to see it.*
- 6:14 And the cart came into the field of Joshua, a Bethshemite, and stood there, where there was a great stone: and they clave the wood of the cart, and offered the kine a burnt offering unto the LORD.*
- 6:15 And the Levites took down the ark of the LORD, and the coffer that was with it, wherein the jewels of gold were, and put them on the great stone: and the men of Bethshemesh offered burnt offerings and sacrificed sacrifices the same day unto the LORD.*
-

“And went along the highway” – This *“highway”* is an interesting ponder. What highway would this have been? It obviously was a road rather than just a footpath, for it was passable by a cart. So all gullies and rivers had to be bridged and all rain wash-outs sufficiently filled. And who would have maintained such a road? The distance from Ekron to the border town of Bethshemesh was 12-13 kms, rising from the coastal plain toward the hill country.

“The lords of the Philistines went after them” – The leaders followed to affirm the truth of it with such a matter of national interest and security at stake. In fact the lords kept watch until they saw the response of the Jews (vs. 16). Perhaps they were wondering if the ark would adversely affect the Israelites as well, as if perhaps there was some biological disease carried by the ark.

Vs. 14 – Not only did those cows go where they needed to go but they stopped where they needed to stop as well. This too the Philistine lords saw as

- 6:16** *And when the five lords of the Philistines had seen it, they returned to Ekron the same day.*
- 6:17** *And these are the golden emerods which the Philistines returned for a trespass offering unto the LORD; for Ashdod one, for Gaza one, for Askelon one, for Gath one, for Ekron one;*
- 6:18** *And the golden mice, according to the number of all the cities of the Philistines belonging to the five lords, both of fenced cities, and of country villages, even unto the great stone of Abel, whereon they set down the ark of the LORD: which stone remaineth unto this day in the field of Joshua, the Bethshemite.*
- 6:19** *And he smote the men of Bethshemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the LORD, even he smote of the people fifty thousand and threescore and ten men: and the people lamented, because the LORD had smitten many of the people with a great slaughter.*
-

they observed from the woods or rocks. Those cows never stopped until they arrived among God's people. It was a circumstance much like the Canaanites looking on in wonder as the flooded Jordan simply stopped flowing and piled up, allowing Joshua and Israel to cross over on dry ground.

Vs. 17 – *“These are the golden emerods”* – This perhaps to explain to later generations where such odd “jewels” had come from, which perhaps travelled with the ark for some time.

6:19-20 – Tragedy at Bethshemesh

Vs. 19 – *“And He smote the men of Bethshemesh”* – Only the priests were meant to see the ark, though they could not touch it. Even in the wilderness when the ark was carried in the appointed way it was covered with the veil of the holy place (Num.

4:5). The Levites as well in transporting the holy implements were not to “*touch any holy thing, lest they die*” (Num. 4:15, 20). So ordinary folks were not to even look upon the ark let alone look *into* it. See how one forbidden thing allowed (to see it) led to another (to see inside).

Obviously this judgment at Bethshemesh did not happen the moment anyone looked into the ark or the danger would have been discerned before the deaths reached double figures. It must have been a judgment that came later upon all who had looked, perhaps at the very peak of the passing parade of lawless lookers. With the numbers involved, clearly it had turned to a free-for-all of gawking. And obviously it was a case of many people following others rather than knowing and doing what God had said. An atmosphere developed here of frenzied freedom in doing what had always been forbidden, but was now suddenly so interestingly available. Everybody else was jumping in so why not? And God put a sudden, tragic end to their peeking party. Those who feared and followed His words lived, and those who followed the crowd into that which was forbidden died. Oh there is a lesson here on man’s dealings with the God of heaven. God is very particular about His way. It does not matter that the situation may have radically changed. It does

6:20 *And the men of Bethshemesh said, Who is able to stand before this holy LORD God?
and to whom shall he go up from us?*

not matter that God spoke centuries before. It does not matter that others seem to be getting away with disregarding His words. What their God required of them through Moses still held true.

“He smote of the people fifty thousand and threescore and ten men” – The huge number here presents a difficulty. Could there even have been such a great number of people in that town? It could be that word went out to the surrounding area of what was available for seeing. The rarity of such an opportunity would have brought thousands from far and wide. Many suggest that the 50,000 part was a scribal error and that only the number 70 was actually meant, but this would hardly constitute *“a very great slaughter”*. The last time such a description was used 30,000 dead were involved (4:10). As well, most Hebrew manuscripts have 50,070. Impossible? Must be an error? Is your faith sufficient to leave the confirmation of this one until glory?

Vs. 20 – *“Who is able to stand before this holy LORD God?”* – It was a good question to ask, but likely not asked in the right spirit here, as these too were now

looking to off-load the ark on somebody else as earnestly as the Philistines. It is a question so easily answered for the one with listening ears. The one willing to humbly walk according to God's way as given in His Word, that is the one able to stand before Him. It is as simple as that! Yet so difficult for the one who will not hear. *"He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God"* (Micah 6:8).

"To whom shall He go up from us?" – "Where can we send this thing to get it out of here?!" There was and is blessing from the Lord upon the house and life of every soul willing to handle Him right, according to what He has spoken. There is trouble in store for every soul handling the Lord wrongly, ignoring or denying His way. There is His way, the right way, and then there are all the many wrong ways men follow in their superstition and lying religion. Consider the many wrong ways to handle the Lord's things in this context, all leaving death and destruction in their wake, both for Jews and Gentiles alike;

- The ark was superstitiously brought to the battle and 30,000 of Israel died, with the priesthood wiped out.

- The ark was put at the “feet” of Dagon and the Philistines with their gods quickly gained a healthy respect for God’s things through disease and “*deadly destruction*”.
- The ark was mishandled, against God’s revealed word and will, by these of Bethshemesh and again “*a very great slaughter*” resulted.
- The ark was later transported in an inappropriate manner by David, again resulting in the tragic death of Uzzah (II Sam. 6).

When the ark was handled appropriately the Lord’s blessing was there (II Sam. 6:11-12). When handled in man’s thoughtless, belittling way death was the result. God will not be messed around or trifled with. He would not have His things handled lightly by men. God is quite willing to give harsh reminders of who He is and of what He has written. Even so in our day there is only one particular way by which a soul may find blessing with God, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Any other way of man not only fails to secure God’s blessing but brings His devastating curse in the end.

That they did not think of returning the ark to

6:21 *And they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kirjathjearim, saying, The Philistines have brought again the ark of the LORD; come ye down, and fetch it up to you.*

7:1 *And the men of Kirjathjearim came, and fetched up the ark of the LORD, and brought it into the house of Abinadab in the hill, and sanctified Eleazar his son to keep the ark of the LORD.*

Shiloh suggests that something had happened there since the ark was lost. In fact the ark was never returned to Shiloh. Perhaps because the place had gained a name for apostasy or was destroyed in some way. But why did Samuel not restore the tabernacle with all of the other sacred implements someplace else? Clues are few, but it seems the tabernacle was later set up at Nob (chapter 21), though without the ark there.

6:21-7:2 – Ark to Kirjathjearim

6:21 – It is unclear why the people of Kirjathjearim were chosen for this appeal to come and take the ark. But notice that those of Bethshemesh wanted them to come down and get it. They did not even wish get near it now in their fear. Apparently Kirjathjearim was up on a hill (7:1) while Bethshemesh was in a valley (vs. 13). Therefore the request to “*come ye down, and fetch it up to you*”.

7:1 – “*And sanctified Eleazar his son to keep the ark*” – It is unclear whether this man was of the line of priests or Levites and thus in any way qualified to

7:2 *And it came to pass, while the ark abode in Kirjathjearim, that the time was long; for it was twenty years: and all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD.*

handle the ark or sacrifices. But he was only appointed as the keeper.

Vs. 2 – *“The time was long; for it was twenty years”*
– The presence of the ark at the house of Abinadab was surely longer than 20 years. For it was there;

- Through the many decades of Samuel’s ministry, from this point when he was a young man until he was *“old and grayheaded”* (12:2).
- Through the forty years of Saul’s reign (Acts 13:21).
- Into the early days of David’s reign, when he moved the ark from the same house to Jerusalem (II Sam. 6:3).

The ark must have remained there for about a century. The 20 years mentioned here may refer to some important event or turning point. Perhaps it was that the ark was there for 20 years before or until *“all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD”*, during that era while young Samuel was growing to maturity and proclaiming God’s words to

7:3 *And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the LORD with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the LORD, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.*

His people and praying for revival and leading the hearts of the nation to the turning described in this chapter.

7:3-17 – Samuel Leads Revival and Victory

Vs. 3 – “*If ye do return unto the LORD*” – Here is the message Samuel brought to God’s people, given in summary form. A whole-hearted turn to the Lord will become evident in a certain kind of response;

- It will “*put away*” all other gods or everything that stands in the way of devotion to the true God. The clear implication is that such false gods of the surrounding nations were common among them (vs. 4). When we neglect the Lord how easy it is to pick up on the idols and interests of those around us. And as our interest in those surrounding idols grows how easy it is to neglect the Lord. Compare the same drift in Jacob’s family (Gen. 35:2-4).
- It will “*prepare*” the heart or be devoted to the Lord God alone, as if married to Him.

- It will “*serve Him only*”, rather than serving self or any other saviours.

Such a genuine heart turn will bring very definite results in the Lord’s deliverance “*out of the hand*” of all oppressors as well. With our eyes on the Lord, He promises to sort out all trouble and troublers. When you are with the Lord in His way, honouring Him alone, He is with you in all of His perfection of ability and timing and direction. Samuel’s message was essentially the message of the Law of Moses.

Vs. 4 – “*The children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth*” – Samuel’s earnest preaching was crowned with victory, and all over the land a general spiritual revival began to develop. The terms “*Baalim and Ashtaroth*” are both plural speaking of the many shrines or idols to these gods in the possession of the people. Baal and Ashtoreth were major Canaanite deities, Baal the male counterpart and Ashtoreth the female. Baal, it was supposed, ruled over the sky, supplying the earth’s fertility. Ashtoreth or Astarte (Ishtar in Babylon, Aphrodite to the Greeks, and Venus to the Romans) was as well considered a goddess of fertility and love, and

7:5 *And Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the LORD.*

7:6 *And they gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured it out before the LORD, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against the LORD. And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh.*

even of war. They believed the sexual union of these two deities is what restored fruitfulness to the plants and creatures of earth. Methods in the worship of these pagan gods were shamefully immoral.

Vs. 5-6 – “*Gather all Israel to Mizpeh*” – With word of the turning of the people Samuel called for a great prayer meeting at Mizpeh, a few kilometres north of Jerusalem, in order to foster the growing interest in the Lord. It was like Samuel to see the answer in a united prayer meeting. This would suggest that the encouraging developments up to that point were the result of the same. Even their actions there described their united attitude of prayer. Their ceremonial pouring out of water perhaps pictured their pouring out of their soul before the Lord, as did Hannah at the first (1:15), beginning what now came to such wonderful fruition here. They fasted in display of their sincere earnestness in their request. The essence of their words are given, confessing “*We have sinned against the LORD*”. It was a united heart of honesty and repentance before God, pointing no fingers of blame at others.

7:7 And when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel were gathered together to Mizpeh, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the children of Israel heard it, they were afraid of the Philistines.

7:8 And the children of Israel said to Samuel, Cease not to cry unto the LORD our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines

Vs. 7 – *“The Philistines went up against Israel”* – For some reason their Philistine neighbours saw this great movement of the people to Mizpeh as a time to attack. Perhaps they interpreted this as a military gathering and therefore a threatening move. Maybe they were already planning war and saw this great gathering in religious devotion as a good opportunity to pounce while all were distracted. Of course, behind their attack was Satan seeking to nip their newfound devotion in the bud. So it will always be when one at last seeks to live for God (Zech. 3:1-2). It had been perhaps 20 years since the Philistine embarrassment over the ark, allowing their sharp awareness of the dangers involved to blunt a bit. The people, being gathered in worship, were caught off guard and therefore greatly afraid. But they had come to a new confidence in the Lord and in Samuel.

Vs. 8 – *“Cease not to cry unto the LORD”* – No longer did they think of the ark as some kind of good luck charm. With hearts put right and eyes turned to their God, their first thought was of Him and of their

7:9 *And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt offering wholly unto the LORD: and Samuel cried unto the LORD for Israel; and the LORD heard him.*
7:10 *And as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but the LORD thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel.*
7:11 *And the men of Israel went out of Mizpeh, and pursued the Philistines, and smote them, until they came under Bethcar.*

need for Him to fight on their side. No more to the ark of the Lord do they look, but to the Lord of the ark! Where does your heart go when facing your dilemmas? Are prayer and dependence on the Lord primary or secondary? As Moses with his hands raised while Joshua led the battle against the Amalekites, even so these now recognized the need for Samuel to keep his hands lifted to heaven in their behalf as they turned to face the problem of the approaching Philistines.

Vs. 9-11 – “*As Samuel was offering*” – Even as Samuel was sacrificing and praying, offering a whole burnt offering “*wholly unto the Lord*”, expressing in this both himself and now his people wholly given to their God, “*the Lord heard him*” and responded wonderfully and most adequately. Indeed the Lord’s ears are open to the cry of those who are wholly His, wholly wanting His will.

“*He thundered with a great thunder*” – This does not seem to be symbolic language, but speaks of actual

7:12 *Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the LORD helped us.*

thunder (something over which Baal was supposed to be lord). With their previous experience of the God of Israel we can easily understand a good measure of jumpiness among the Philistines, particularly among the older men. Then with this stunningly violent response from the heavens it just sent them right over the edge. And so suddenly the only problem for the men of Israel was trying to keep up in pursuit of those panic-stricken Philistines running like the wind. It was a means that marked the victory as clearly from the Lord.

Vs. 12 – *“Hitherto hath the LORD helped us”* – *“Ebenezer”* means “stone of help”. It was a marker commemorating the day the Lord was back with them in power because they were back with Him with all their heart. It marked a day when they did not even need to fight in the battle, a battle fought in fact at the same place where they had suffered two previous defeats. But the stone marked the difference from before. Now their God was with them as their Helper.

The moral of the story here is *first things first*. First we must win the spiritual battle. We must come to

7:13 So the Philistines were subdued, and they came no more into the coast of Israel: and the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel.

7:14 And the cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron even unto Gath; and the coasts thereof did Israel deliver out of the hands of the Philistines. And there was peace between Israel and the Amorites.

7:15 And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life.

7:16 And he went from year to year in circuit to Bethel, and Gilgal, and Mizpeh, and judged Israel in all those places.

spiritual victory, to right relation to God. Then the Lord is with us in strength to give success in our struggles on the ground. Compare the same lesson later repeated in the book of Haggai (1:4-11).

Vs. 13-14 – *“They came no more into the coast of Israel”* – With the Lord now with them their victory was both thorough and lasting. Not only were the Philistines plagued with troubles all the remaining days of Samuel’s life, but Israel was able to recover territory lost to the Philistines bordering on Ekron and Gath.

Vs. 15-17 – *“Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life”* – Samuel served as the nation’s leader in interceding for them before the Lord and speaking and teaching the Lord’s words and judging concerns or cases between the people. As the nation’s judge and teacher Samuel actually worked a circuit of a few cities in the middle of the land close to where his home was in Ramah. They were good and peaceful days in the nation’s history, once they

7:17 And his return was to Ramah; for there was his house; and there he judged Israel; and there he built an altar unto the LORD.

finally turned wholly back to the Lord. It is no different with us. Good and peaceful days will be ours when finally we turn or *return* to the Lord with our whole heart.

“His return was to Ramah; for there was his house” – Ramah was where Samuel’s parents lived. How good of the Lord to give Samuel back to Hannah into her old age. She only lost her son for a time, but gained so very much more for herself and her people.

As Warren Wiersbe pointed out;

“The nation fell into sin and defeat because Eli had neglected his home; but God saved the nation because of the prayers of a godly mother (Hannah) and her God-given son. As go the homes, so goes the nation.”

Alas! Samuel later neglected his home and down came the nation again (8:3).

“...Behold, thou art old,
and thy sons walk not in thy ways:
now make us a king
to judge us like all the nations”

(1 Sam. 8:5)

Class 6 – I Samuel 8-9

8:1 *And it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel.*

8:2 *Now the name of his firstborn was Joel; and the name of his second, Abiah: they were judges in Beersheba.*

With chapter 8 we enter into that era when the nation of Israel began to be ruled by a king. It began with their demand for a king in this chapter and then follows with Saul's appointment and rise to prominence. God first pointed him out and appointed him through Samuel, and then used circumstances to lift Saul to popularity.

8:1-5 – King Demanded

Vs. 1-2 – *“They were judges in Beersheba”* – It seems odd that Samuel would station both of his sons as judges in Beersheba on the southern edge of the nation. Did it indicate half-heartedness in Samuel to appoint his godless boys to leadership? If the people of the land were aware of the corrupt nature of those sons then Samuel would have known also.

Vs. 3 – *“His sons walked not in his ways”* – It is an all-too-common heartache of many who have walked with God to see their children choose not to follow Him. Samuel's sons not only did not follow

the Lord, they were not men of integrity either (an unhappy reminder of Eli's sons). They were motivated by money and willing to pervert justice for a price. Was Samuel too busy helping others that he had no time for his own? Seems strange in view of his background and keen awareness of the ruin brought to the entire nation through Eli's weak parenting. Why appoint them at all? Why not ask God for His guidance? Did Samuel justify so appointing them in that their duties were civil rather than religious? And why such boys resulting from such a godly man of prayer? Would God not answer Samuel's cries concerning his wayward boys as He had concerning his wayward nation? And where was the godly influence of Samuel's wife to make a difference, when the vital role of her mother-in-law must have become *legendary* in those days? How very easy it is to point the finger of blame at parents. And perhaps in most cases of failure there is plenty of fault to be found there. But God Himself also loses children to lower influences, and not due to His failed leadership. Every individual must come to his own decisions about God and His ways of wisdom. Many, though living under the finest influences, have chosen for themselves the way of

8:4 Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah,

8:5 And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.

ruin.

Vs. 4-5 – “*Make us a king to judge us*” – As Samuel aged into his senior years the elders of the land began talking. They trusted Samuel, but they knew he would die before long, and they did not want to be landed with his sons ruling over them. The right thing for them to do at that point would have been to cry to God as their King, to pour out their souls before the Lord, as did Hannah to such wonderful effect, to seek their answer from heaven rather than from among men, to pursue God’s power rather than human programme or administration. Men are still given to the same error today, thinking human structures or policies will win the day or hold us true into the future when simple dependence in a living relation with God is ever the real answer for every generation. Men and missions and ministries can get all constricted in such policies and procedures, losing the vibrancy of a Spirit led work.

“*Like all the nations*” – They were looking across the border at the way the world ran their business.

8:6 But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD.

When God's people find their guidance from the world's way rather than from God they cannot help but to be moving against God. He may allow and even seem to bless such approaches, as here, but again as here, something drops from the heart of it at the same time. In fact something already had. And we set ourselves on the road to regret.

8:6-9 – God's Response

Vs. 6 – “*And Samuel prayed unto the LORD*” – Samuel's displeasure sent his heart to prayer, as was his way. And see again how the Lord was ever there for him. The contrast between Samuel and the elders is striking in this regard. They too might have looked to the Lord who stood ready to counsel and lead them, had they wanted Him. But they instead chose to lean on their own understanding. He has promised His direction to all who trust Him with ALL their heart and acknowledge Him in all their ways (Prov. 3:5-6). But instead they wanted a man, a system, a government they could trust for their help rather than their God.

On the Side

Did you ever wonder what became of Hannah? Though we came to so appreciate her through the emotional struggles she faced, and though her fresh and godly influence carried the nation to prosperity through their God for decades, we are never told what happened to her or even how or when she died. Does it really matter? It must be that it does not or God would have included such details. What God has *revealed* to us is His point of interest. See how He is more concerned with the welfare of His people and His work on earth, for these are the things recorded in His words. Death simply brought Hannah to Himself, the particular details of the way of it being of small consequence it would seem.

How easy it is for us to get caught up in the emotion and sentimentalities of life here below when God's purpose on earth is people and ministry. His focus is meant to be our focus as well. To allow a wrong emphasis to develop in our heart could keep us from God's work and purpose. Sentimental concerns over absence from family and friends could easily have kept us from ministry in this land, robbing us and others of eternal fruit here. How many have allowed lesser things to rob God and

- 8:7 *And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.*
- 8:8 *According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee.*
- 8:9 *Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them.*
-

others of the same?

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Vs. 7-8 – *“They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me”* – Samuel was feeling rejection. Perhaps he felt a bit sold out by the people he had served from his youth. But it was not him the leaders had rejected but the Lord. See how fully the Lord was aware of the situation. It is good tonic for a hurting heart when facing the same feelings in ministry. Hear as well what the Lord implies here, that folks treat spiritual leaders in the same way they treat the Lord. More tonic. It had in fact been the leaning of the hearts of God’s people since day one. It always has been our natural leaning. Where are the souls truly walking in dependence upon the Lord, without the need of human props, relations, friendships, systems, etc.?

Vs. 9 – *“Now therefore hearken unto their voice”* – As we considered a few weeks back, we see here an

8:10 *And Samuel told all the words of the LORD unto the people that asked of him a king.*

8:11 *And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots.*

8:12 *And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and will set them to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots.*

example of God's *permissive* will. It was not His *perfect* will for them that they should demand a king at that time. Yet for reasons known to God He permitted their request, just as He later permitted the construction of the temple to replace the tabernacle. And what He permits but does not prefer always ends with less than the best results.

“Yet protest solemnly unto them” – Though allowing their demand, still God would have the people know His displeasure and the folly of their direction and where such a shift would lead them.

8:10-18 – King Described

Vs. 10 – *“Samuel told all the words of the LORD”* – As had been his way from the day he was forced to fully tell the Lord's message to Eli, even so Samuel held nothing back now of all the Lord said.

Vs. 11-18 – *“This will be the manner of the king”*;

- He will take your sons to be his soldiers and

- 8:13** *And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers.*
- 8:14** *And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants.*
- 8:15** *And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants.*
- 8:16** *And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work.*
- 8:17** *He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants.*
-

servants (vs. 11-12). Saul always watched for “*any strong man, or any valiant man*” (14:52). Jesse lost the most faithful shepherd boy he likely ever had when Saul took young David for his own service.

- He will take your daughters to be cooks and bakers for his service (vs. 13).
- He will take the best of your land to use as he sees fit (vs. 14). Compare King Ahab’s acquisition of Naboth’s vineyard (I Ki. 21).
- He will tax your increase to pay his administration costs (vs. 15, 17). This 10% would be on top of their required giving for the service of the tabernacle, priests, and poor. His army would need to be paid as well, and weaponry produced, for “*who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges?*” (I Cor. 9:7).
- He will freely take anything of yours he may desire for his own work (vs. 16).

8:18 *And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the LORD will not hear you in that day.*

8:19 *Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us;*

8:20 *That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles.*

- He will essentially own you as a nation of servants. He will hold in his hands the power of life and death over his people (Rom. 13; Gen. 9:6).
- When you one day cry out under the oppression of your king, the King of heaven will refuse to hear you (vs. 18). The Lord often speaks of turning His ear from the one who will not hear His voice (Prov. 1:28-30; Isa. 1:15; Jer. 11:11; Micah 3:4).

8:19-22 – Direction Confirmed

Vs. 19 – *“The people refused to hear the voice of Samuel”* – They had made firm their decision, even though they had learned to trust Samuel’s words as a true *“prophet of the LORD”* to whom the Lord revealed Himself (3:20-21). Though they could not deny that they were hearing from God through Samuel, yet they would not heed God’s words.

Vs. 20 – *“That we also may be like all the nations”* –

8:21 *And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he rehearsed them in the ears of the LORD.*

8:22 *And the LORD said to Samuel, Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king. And Samuel said unto the men of Israel, Go ye every man unto his city.*

Did it seem to them that the nations were coping so much better than they? Could the world offer a better way than God and dependence on Him? Is human government the answer to man's need then? Does not such human rule always tend toward pride and graft and abuse, the natural tendencies of corrupt man? While God was seeking for a people of His own, united in looking to Him by faith, they were seeking for something more visible or tangible or "dependable" on which to rest their hopes.

Vs. 21 – *"He rehearsed them in the ears of the LORD"* – Again simple communion with the Lord was ever Samuel's way, the kind of simple, humble way the Lord sought in all His people. Again, the contrast comes out clearly between two kinds of people; the one with eyes up, and all the rest with eyes down. We get the impression that Samuel was praying right there in the midst of their meeting, perhaps communing with the Lord quietly in his heart, as Nehemiah before King Ahasuerus (Neh. 2:4).

Vs. 22 – *"Make them a king"* – The decision was confirmed and agreed upon, and the elders were

9:1 Now there was a man of Benjamin, whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bechorath, the son of Aphiah, a Benjamite, a mighty man of power.

9:2 And he had a son, whose name was Saul, a choice young man, and a goodly; and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people.

sent home to await God's appointment. There was not even to be a vote, for they must at least trust the Lord for His choice.

9:1-14 – Saul's Way to Samuel

Vs. 1 – "*A mighty man of power*" – Boaz was referred to in this way as well (Ruth 2:1), apparently describing a prominent man of great possessions.

Vs. 2 – "*A choice young man, and a goodly*" – Saul was a fine figure of a man in many ways. He was taller and more handsome than all, and came from an important family. It seems that if all the young men of the day were passed before the nation, Saul would have won the vote. Nobody looked more the kingly part. See how God brought forward the man among them who most *looked* like a king, yet a man with little of a true heart for God. Saul was *man's* kind of king but not *God's* kind of king. God would deal with the matter of appearances from the outset of Israel's monarchy days, teaching them vital lessons. With the next king it would be the other

- 9:3 *And the asses of Kish Saul's father were lost. And Kish said to Saul his son, Take now one of the servants with thee, and arise, go seek the asses.*
- 9:4 *And he passed through mount Ephraim, and passed through the land of Shalisha, but they found them not: then they passed through the land of Shalim, and there they were not: and he passed through the land of the Benjamites, but they found them not.*
- 9:5 *And when they were come to the land of Zuph, Saul said to his servant that was with him, Come, and let us return; lest my father leave caring for the asses, and take thought for us.*
- 9:6 *And he said unto him, Behold now, there is in this city a man of God, and he is an honourable man; all that he saith cometh surely to pass; now let us go thither; peradventure he can shew us our way that we should go.*
- 9:7 *Then said Saul to his servant, But, behold, if we go, what shall we bring the man? for the bread is spent in our vessels, and there is not a present to bring to the man of God: what have we?*
-

way around. For David was the least likely to be chosen from the family of Jesse and yet he was a man after God's own heart. Compare 16:7. Passion for God was thus shown to succeed over presence before men.

Vs. 3-5 – Their search for the lost donkeys took them on a long and winding route that landed them close to Samuel's city of Ramah before they were at last ready to give up. This then gave rise to the idea of asking help of "*the man of God*" there.

Vs. 6 – Note well the reputation for dignity that followed godly Samuel into his old age. Indeed every true "*man of God*" will be "*an honourable man*" before men. May you and I as well know the same joy of living and dying as people of honour.

Vs. 7 – "*What shall we bring the man*" – It seems it

9:8 And the servant answered Saul again, and said, Behold, I have here at hand the fourth part of a shekel of silver: that will I give to the man of God, to tell us our way.
9:9 (Beforetime in Israel, when a man went to enquire of God, thus he spake, Come, and let us go to the seer: for he that is now called a Prophet was beforetime called a Seer.)
9:10 Then said Saul to his servant, Well said; come, let us go. So they went unto the city where the man of God was.

was a common practice to give the prophet some food or money gift for his services.

Vs. 8-10 – A shekel = 11.4 grams = 0.4 oz. Thus the servant's piece of money was a mere 3 grams or 0.1 oz of silver.

The guiding hand of God is evident here, in;

- The loss of the animals (vs. 3).
- Their search bringing them to Ramah (vs. 4).
- The servant's possession of a gift and willingness to give it (vs. 8), an important obstacle removed.
- Samuel's arrival in the city that very day (vs. 12).
- The perfect timing of their arrival, even as Samuel appeared on his way to the feast (vs. 13-14).
- Their meeting Samuel in the street (vs. 18).

9:11 *And as they went up the hill to the city, they found young maidens going out to draw water, and said unto them, Is the seer here?*

9:12 *And they answered them, and said, He is; behold, he is before you: make haste now, for he came to day to the city; for there is a sacrifice of the people to day in the high place:*

9:13 *As soon as ye be come into the city, ye shall straightway find him, before he go up to the high place to eat: for the people will not eat until he come, because he doth bless the sacrifice; and afterwards they eat that he bidden. Now therefore get you up; for about this time ye shall find him.*

- God's prior briefing of Samuel for this meeting (vs. 15-16).

The editorial note in vs. 9 is given to explain the term used in vs. 11. “*Seer*” obviously refers to one who sees God’s special revelations. The English word “*prophet*” comes of the Greek, meaning to “speak forth” or “speak before” (pro). The Hebrew word behind “*prophet*” here comes as well of the verb to speak. So the older term focused on what is *seen* or received, the latter on what is *said* or given out.

Vs. 11-13 – Meeting with the maidens. The men were making their way “*up the hill to the city*” of Ramah. Even the name, Ramah, means height or high place. Upon meeting a bevy of girls coming out to the well for water, the men asked concerning Samuel. The young women explained that there was a feast planned to which Samuel would even then be making his way. Thus there was a need for speed (“*make haste now*”) if they were to catch him

9:14 *And they went up into the city: and when they were come into the city, behold, Samuel came out against them, for to go up to the high place.*

9:15 *Now the LORD had told Samuel in his ear a day before Saul came, saying,*

9:16 *To morrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him to be captain over my people Israel, that he may save my people out of the hand of the Philistines: for I have looked upon my people, because their cry is come unto me.*

before he entered the place of the feast, for it seems only “*they...that be bidden*” would be allowed entrance. The feast would take place at “*the high place*”, the Hebrew word “bamah”. So it was to the bamah of Ramah that Samuel would go, or the high place of the high place. The women affirmed that the seer was directly before their way, that they were on the right path and that he could be found immediately upon entering the city. Their encouragements were bright and hopeful, insisting that “*ye shall find him*” that day if they hurried.

Vs. 14 – “*Behold, Samuel came out*” – As Saul and servant entered the city street from one side Samuel entered “*against them*” or opposite them from the other side, even then on his way to the feast. It was just as the maidens had said.

9:15-24 – Samuel Meets Saul

Vs. 15-17 – Samuel informed by God – God had spoken to Samuel the day before “*in his ear*”

9:17 *And when Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said unto him, Behold the man whom I spake to thee of! this same shall reign over my people.*

9:18 *Then Saul drew near to Samuel in the gate, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, where the seer's house is.*

(perhaps indicating an audible voice), informing him of this coming meeting with the one who would become the “*captain of My people*”. Samuel was given the day, the hour, the gender, and the tribe (vs. 16). And then when Samuel’s eyes fell upon Saul the Lord affirmed to him that this was the one (vs. 17). Again, Saul certainly looked the part.

“*I will send thee a man*” – Though Saul was sent by his father in search of the lost animals it was really God who sent him. A valuable loss and major inconvenience turned out to be the Lord’s leading, turning to greatest opportunity and honour. Perhaps every loss or inconvenience should be looked upon with expectancy rather than irritation for the opportunities it may herald.

Note the Lord’s concern and provision for “*My people*” in vs. 17. God would still care for His people, though He must now do so in the manner they demanded, through a human king.

Vs. 18 – “*Tell me, I pray thee, where the seer’s house is*” – Consider the implications of Saul’s query;

9:19 And Samuel answered Saul, and said, I am the seer: go up before me unto the high place; for ye shall eat with me to day, and to morrow I will let thee go, and will tell thee all that is in thine heart.

9:20 And as for thine asses that were lost three days ago, set not thy mind on them; for they are found. And on whom is all the desire of Israel? Is it not on thee, and on all thy father's house?

- He had never met Samuel before this, though the man had been the premier man of God and religious leader in the land for decades. Obviously Saul had never sought Samuel's company before. It was the servant who informed of Samuel's existence (vs. 6). It is a suggestion of Saul's lack of interest in things close to God's heart.
- Samuel was not recognizable as the great and honourable seer. It seems he looked like an ordinary old man rather than a great man. No pomp, robes, or ceremonies. None running before his chariot.
- Yet Samuel was not offended that he was not recognized. Though a great man for God he was a simple man, without pride.

Vs. 19 – Upon identifying himself Samuel immediately invited Saul and servant to the feast and to stay the night, with the promise that he would reveal to him all of his concern.

9:21 And Saul answered and said, Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? wherefore then speakest thou so to me?

9:22 And Samuel took Saul and his servant, and brought them into the parlour, and made them sit in the chiefest place among them that were bidden, which were about thirty persons.

Vs. 20 – As a token of the Lord’s ability through him, the seer put Saul’s heart to rest concerning the lost animals. He knew the kind of animal, that there were more than one involved, that they had been lost and how long ago, and that Saul was concerned. With one sentence Samuel put that whole matter to rest, that Saul’s attention might be turned to more important concerns.

“On whom is all the desire of Israel?” – Since the meeting with the elders the entire nation was awaiting word as to who would be appointed king.

Vs. 21 – Saul’s response was similar to Gideon’s littlest of the little response in Judges 6:15. Yet though Saul was of the smallest tribe he was by no means of the least family (9:1). There seems to be a measure of humility here to be sure, but there was something else involved as well. Saul clearly perceived what Samuel was implying and recoiled rather than rising to the task from the first, talking up his smallness.

9:23 *And Samuel said unto the cook, Bring the portion which I gave thee, of which I said unto thee, Set it by thee.*

9:24 *And the cook took up the shoulder, and that which was upon it, and set it before Saul. And Samuel said, Behold that which is left! set it before thee, and eat: for unto this time hath it been kept for thee since I said, I have invited the people. So Saul did eat with Samuel that day.*

Vs. 22 – “*Made them sit in the chieftest place*” – Note that the “*chieftest place*” or the seat of highest honour (head of the table) was not already taken or assigned to some other. For that place of honour had been left open for the unknown king-to-be whose arrival God had announced the day before. Little did the maidens know that they had actually spoken to he who was the reason for the feast.

Vs. 23-24 – “*Behold that which is left*” – “*Left*” here is in the sense of set aside or reserved. Samuel had made prior arrangements to reserve the largest portion for the guest he would designate, thus again implying that the whole affair was in anticipation of this one God had told Samuel He would send at that day and time. Samuel had such confidence in God’s words that he actually called a feast, inviting perhaps the chief men of the city, and leaving the seat of honour vacant for God to fill according to His promise! True faith in God’s words actually *acts* upon His words, actively making provision for God to do what He said He would do. True faith opens our mouth and moves our feet.

- 9:25 *And when they were come down from the high place into the city, Samuel communed with Saul upon the top of the house.*
- 9:26 *And they arose early: and it came to pass about the spring of the day, that Samuel called Saul to the top of the house, saying, Up, that I may send thee away. And Saul arose, and they went out both of them, he and Samuel, abroad.*
- 9:27 *And as they were going down to the end of the city, Samuel said to Saul, Bid the servant pass on before us, (and he passed on), but stand thou still a while, that I may shew thee the word of God.*
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9:25-10:8 – Samuel Appoints Saul

Vs. 25-27 – “*Samuel communed with Saul upon the top of the house*” – After the meal they talked together into the cool of the evening up on the flat roof of Samuel’s house, where the refreshing breeze could best reach them. And then the following morning Samuel spoke with Saul again, anointing him then to be king and speaking prophecies concerning him.

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Ponder Points

Consider the gospel parallels in this account, what may perhaps be suggestions of the gospel approach in the encounter with those maidens along the road;

- Saul and servant must go up to Ramah to see the Seer, to the high place of the high place (vs. 11). They must travel up the hill, the way of resistance, the hard way.

- The maidens encouraged the seekers to “*make haste*” to catch the Seer before he entered the feast (vs. 12). “*Before*” implies a time limit after which opportunity ends. We too are bidden to “*make haste*” to meet the Prophet before He enters that place of the feast. If we make our appeal to Jesus before it is too late we too might be given entrance, as Saul and friend. Compare Christ’s parable of the 10 virgins (Matt. 25:1-13). Once the doors were closed it was too late!
- They spoke of those “*that are bidden*” joining the feast, implying that all others may not join (vs. 13). Not everybody will enter that feast on high.
- They said “*Behold, he is before you*”, and that upon entering the city they would “*straightway find him*”. Even so all who seek Jesus may “*straightway find Him*”. For the word of faith is not so high or low or far away that a seeker may not attain to it or locate it. The Lord is near to every true seeker. Salvation in Christ is right before all and available “*straightway*”.
- As Samuel did not look like a seer, even so Jesus did not look like a Messiah. There was about Him none of the showy pageantry that

might be expected. In fact, “*when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him*” (Isa. 53:2).

- Upon approaching, the seekers were *immediately* invited in to the feast. This implied not the least reluctance to receive them. In fact, to his surprise Saul discovered a place already reserved for him there, as if he had been expected. Even so it is for all who sincerely come to Jesus. The dying thief (the lowest of man) was *immediately* received with greatest willingness, only to discover upon death that the Lord had been expecting him in the paradise he found.
- The maidens spoke with bright expectancy that “*about this time* [literally “today”] *ye shall find him*”. “*Behold, now is the day of salvation*” (II Cor. 6:2). “*Today if ye will hear His voice*” and “*harden not your hearts*” (Heb. 3:15).

We who know Christ are like those maidens along the way to the celestial city, bidding all to “*make haste*” and go to the Prophet before the door to the “*high place*” is closed. And for everyone who does as he is instructed he will find it to be just exactly as he was told (vs. 14).

Class 7 – I Samuel 10-11

10:1 Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not because the LORD hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance?

In the morning following the feast in Ramah Samuel walked with Saul to the edge of the city and there Saul's servant was bidden to go on ahead, leaving the two alone together.

9:25-10:8 – Samuel Appoints Saul

10:1 – *“The LORD hath anointed thee to be captain”* – That Saul should be anointed as *“captain”* was what the Lord had spoken in Samuel's ear two days before (9:16). This was their first king and thus the first time one was anointed with oil to the office. There would be others to follow in David (16:13) and Solomon (I Ki. 1:39) and Jehu (I Ki. 19:16). Anointing seems to express sanctification or setting apart for the Lord's service. The priests were anointed to their office (Ex. 28:41). And in Numbers 7:1 when Moses set up the tabernacle he *“anointed it, and sanctified it”*. Anointing with oil also seems to be associated with the Holy Spirit's empowering for service (vs. 6, 10; 16:13). Thus it seemed to perhaps carry some spiritual significance. It need

10:2 When thou art departed from me to day, then thou shalt find two men by Rachel's sepulchre in the border of Benjamin at Zelzah; and they will say unto thee, The asses which thou wentest to seek are found: and, lo, thy father hath left the care of the asses, and sorroweth for you, saying, What shall I do for my son?

10:3 Then shalt thou go on forward from thence, and thou shalt come to the plain of Tabor, and there shall meet thee three men going up to God to Bethel, one carrying three kids, and another carrying three loaves of bread, and another carrying a bottle of wine:

10:4 And they will salute thee, and give thee two loaves of bread; which thou shalt receive of their hands.

not be a public ceremony, but before God more than before men (II Ki. 9:2-3). Compare Samuel anointing and kissing the first king of Israel here with her final King anointed and kissed in Psalm 2.

Vs. 2-8 – Samuel now spoke prophecies and instructions to Saul, specifying locations, events, and even numbers involved. Samuel's awareness of events both before and after their meeting displayed God's hand in what was spoken to Saul. Upon leaving;

- They would meet two men with word of two found donkeys and one fretting dad (vs. 2).
- Three worshippers would feed them (vs. 3-4). God was mindful of their need, remembering that their bread was spent in their vessels (9:7).
- Saul would join a group of prophets in prophesying (vs. 5-6).

10:5 After that thou shalt come to the hill of God, where is the garrison of the Philistines: and it shall come to pass, when thou art come thither to the city, that thou shalt meet a company of prophets coming down from the high place with a psaltery, and a tabret, and a pipe, and a harp, before them; and they shall prophesy:
10:6 And the Spirit of the LORD will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man.

Vs. 5 – This is the first time this “*company of prophets*” is mentioned in the Bible. Again, it may be that Samuel was instrumental in establishing some type of school where men could be trained for religious ministry.

Vs. 6 – “*And thou shalt prophesy with them*” – What was this prophesying? It seems the same later came upon Saul again in chapter 19, even with distracting effect there. In I Chronicles 25 David appointed men “*who should prophesy*” with musical instruments, and who “*were instructed in the songs of the LORD*”, performing with cunning (vs. 1, 7). The mention of musical instruments features here as well (vs. 5), and seems to indicate the beginning of this kind of prophesying in song. David’s playing of music would later become the answer for Saul in times of spiritual drift. Perhaps this prophesying involved miraculous awareness of the songs of this “*company of prophets*”, things Saul had never before known, and phenomenal ability to sing and perform skilfully with them having never previously so learned.

10:7 And let it be, when these signs are come unto thee, that thou do as occasion serve thee; for God is with thee.

10:8 And thou shalt go down before me to Gilgal; and, behold, I will come down unto thee, to offer burnt offerings, and to sacrifice sacrifices of peace offerings: seven days shalt thou tarry, till I come to thee, and shew thee what thou shalt do.

“Thou...shalt be turned into another man” – This obviously refers to a work of the Spirit upon Saul, not what he would become through his own doing, but what would *“come upon”* him. The question of whether this coming of the Spirit upon Saul involved the salvation of his soul cannot be answered with any real certainty. In these early days Saul seemed to know the Lord, yet in his later years he showed quite the opposite. It is perhaps an example of the 2nd or 3rd soil of Christ’s Matthew 13 parable of sower and soils that we see in this man. It is quite possible to get caught up in the wonder and excitement of the Lord and His things without being saved by faith. There is much in the Bible to suggest that the proper fruits of salvation continued in a life are much of the proof of salvation’s reality, as we see in Samuel, but not so in Saul. The coming of the Spirit upon Saul was the Lord’s making and fitting of him for kingly appointment, not to be confused with the indwelling of the Spirit within all true believers in our current age.

10:9 And it was so, that when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave him another heart: and all those signs came to pass that day.

10:10 And when they came thither to the hill, behold, a company of prophets met him; and the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them.

Vs. 8 – *“Thou shalt go down before me to Gilgal”* – This event would not follow directly on the heels of the other string of events mentioned. It seems it was understood that this would only happen later (chapter 13).

“Till I come to thee, and show thee what thou shalt do” – Saul was to be completely dependent on Samuel for guidance. Was this the core of the problem that later developed in Saul’s disobedience? Was his seeming humility really a false humility? By his disobedient sacrifice at Gilgal in chapter 13 it seems Saul was perhaps expressing a desire to be independent from Samuel’s guidance.

Vs. 9-13 – All things happened just as Samuel had spoken.

Vs. 9-10 – *“God gave him another heart”* – Note the great emphasis in this context on God’s supernatural working in Saul;

- Samuel promised the Spirit’s coming and Saul’s transformation *“into another man”* (vs.

10:11 And it came to pass, when all that knew him beforetime saw that, behold, he prophesied among the prophets, then the people said one to another, What is this that is come unto the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?

6).

- “God gave him another heart” (vs. 9).
- “The Spirit of God came upon him” (vs. 19).
- All his associates were amazed at his transformation (vs. 11).
- It even became proverbial that Saul was “*also among the prophets*” (vs. 12).

Yet again, Saul’s later life leaves us with many questions as to the reality of his relation to God. There was certainly some spiritual experience in him here at the outset. Yet the depth or extent of it is unclear, for it did not seem to last. We find therefore a truth suggested here, even in these early days of Israel’s history, which would later be highlighted more prominently in the N.T. It is the fact that one can demonstrate the most convincing evidences of the Lord’s working in his life and yet be completely without God! One can even be involved to the extent of prophesying and casting out demons and doing “*many wonderful works*” in the Lord’s name (Matt. 7:21-23), yet all of this without ever

10:12 And one of the same place answered and said, But who is their father? Therefore it became a proverb, Is Saul also among the prophets?

knowing God's work of redemption in the soul ("*I never knew you*"). Even Judas Iscariot was among those enthusing over the Spirit's ministry powers in Luke 10. The demons were even subject to him through the Lord's name. Let it be a solemn warning to the church of this age. The most stunning "manifestations of the Spirit" do not ensure *salvation* through the Spirit. "*Ye must be born again*"! May there be no such questions about us as there were with Saul in our relation to the Lord. May the reality of our salvation be displayed in our satisfaction and service of the Lord to the end.

Vs. 11-12 – "*What is this that is come unto the son of Kish?*" – All who knew Saul recognized that something phenomenal had come upon him, resulting in a powerful change in his character.

"But who is their father" – Compare the questions asked of Saul with those later asked of Jesus (Matt. 13:54-56). Folks could not understand how a man could rise so significantly above the nature of his father. It is a testimony to the transforming power of God through the Spirit's working that we can in

10:13 And when he had made an end of prophesying, he came to the high place.

10:14 And Saul's uncle said unto him and to his servant, Whither went ye? And he said, To seek the asses: and when we saw that they were no where, we came to Samuel.

10:15 And Saul's uncle said, Tell me, I pray thee, what Samuel said unto you

some ways be lifted above the calibre of common men to reflect the image of God. It is even truer in this current age of the Spirit's indwelling presence in those truly saved that we can be "*changed into the same image*" of God "*from glory to glory*". It is the Spirit of God that effects such transformation of character, as we renew our minds through "*beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord*" (Rom. 12:1-2; II Cor. 4:17-18). The change can and should be so prominent that people are inclined to ask, How can there be such amazing wisdom and works in this one, when we know he is just "*the carpenter's son*"? It is that principle that has the effect of diminishing the prophet's honour on his home turf.

Vs. 13 – "*He came to the high place*" – This was perhaps the place from which the "*company of prophets*" had come (vs. 5).

Vs. 14 – By comparing 14:50, it seems this uncle of Saul was Abner (?), the man who would soon become captain of Saul's army, and who would later lead the northern tribes of Israel under Ishbosheth against David (II Sam. 2:8ff).

10:16 And Saul said unto his uncle, He told us plainly that the asses were found. But of the matter of the kingdom, whereof Samuel spake, he told him not.

10:17 And Samuel called the people together unto the LORD to Mizpeh;

10:18 And said unto the children of Israel, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all kingdoms, and of them that oppressed you:

Vs. 17-25 – Saul’s public unveiling.

Vs. 17 – “*Samuel called the people together unto the LORD to Mizpeh*” – It was a return to that same place where so many years before they had joined in united commitment to the Lord, witnessing such stunning victory against their enemies (7:5-6).

Vs. 18 – “*Thus saith the LORD God of Israel*” – This was not just *Samuel* moaning his displeasure with their choice again. It was the Lord’s words he brought to them. And not only was it the Lord speaking through Samuel, but it was to the Lord the people spoke when making their demand to Samuel for a king (vs. 19, “*ye have said unto Him*”). The point of Samuel’s words here was that a simple look to the nation’s history would reveal the Lord’s adequate protection. His hand was so obviously and powerfully revealed in their deliverance from Egypt. And not only from Egypt, but “*all kingdoms*” they faced proved no match for them. Consider their victories over the Amalekites in the wilderness and over the Transjordan nations and over the

10:19 And ye have this day rejected your God, who himself saved you out of all your adversities and your tribulations; and ye have said unto him, Nay, but set a king over us. Now therefore present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes, and by your thousands.
10:20 And when Samuel had caused all the tribes of Israel to come near, the tribe of Benjamin was taken.

Canaanites. None were able to stand before them. There was no tyrant or trial from which God had failed to deliver them when they asked Him for deliverance. And since their arrival in the land, whenever they turned back to the Lord as a people He gave them remarkable victories, through saviours such as Othniel and Ehud, Deborah and Barak, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson. Their God had so faithfully served His people as the great Oppressor of all oppressors.

Vs. 19 – “*Ye have this day rejected your God*” – But though their God was the One “*who Himself*” had so evidently been their great Blessor and Protector, yet the nation rejected Him and replaced Him with a human protector and rescuer. Not only had they refused to recognize the Lord’s hand in all of the history leading to their current freedom and well-being, but they implied by their choice that a tall, pretty bloke on the ground could actually do a better job of it! They had returned to the Lord rejection for His protection.

10:21 When he had caused the tribe of Benjamin to come near by their families, the family of Matri was taken, and Saul the son of Kish was taken: and when they sought him, he could not be found.

10:22 Therefore they enquired of the LORD further, if the man should yet come thither. And the LORD answered, Behold he hath hid himself among the stuff.

Vs. 20-22 – *“The tribe of Benjamin was taken”* – It is likely the method of casting lots is what was used here. Joshua had used the same in dividing the land (Josh. 14), thus it was a recognized method among them for finding the Lord’s specific will. The process was a simple one. A bag was likely prepared in which were 11 black stones and one white one. An elder or representative from each tribe would one after the other reach in and take out a stone from the bag until the white one was selected. Then the same procedure for each of the main family divisions of that chosen tribe. And then the same with the sub-families, following down the family tree until the Lord displayed the individual of His choice. Apparently this all took place in Saul’s absence, while he was hiding. It seems then in the last round the bag must have been left with only the white stone and only Saul yet to draw. Though for some reason Saul did not want any part of being king, yet through the casting of lots and in answer to prayer the Lord set him before the people anyway.

“He hath hid himself among the stuff” – Saul’s

10:23 And they ran and fetched him thence: and when he stood among the people, he was higher than any of the people from his shoulders and upward.

10:24 And Samuel said to all the people, See ye him whom the LORD hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people? And all the people shouted, and said, God save the king.

reluctance not only showed his lack of commitment to the cause, but it also displayed in him a healthy dose of insecurity, wondering if he could actually attract a following and lead them to victory. Such a lack of self-confidence showed that his hope (or lack thereof) was residing in his own abilities rather than in the Lord. The trust of all was resting upon *the man*, a hollow hope which showed signs of fraying around the edges from the start. Only the Lord can bring victory, even to and through the most able and prepared of men (Prov. 21:31). Insecurity in a soul only displays his lack of trust in God. As well the image of big, impressive Saul crouched and cowering among the gear and needing to be dragged into the daylight does not exactly stir the impression of kingly courage does it? Or even maturity for that matter. Yet all such doubts were swept aside in their desperate determination to prop up and rest their hopes on a man.

Vs. 23-24 – *“There is none like him among all the people”* – There it is again! It is the 2nd time Saul’s height is mentioned (9:2). Again, it is a focus upon

10:25 Then Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom, and wrote it in a book, and laid it up before the LORD. And Samuel sent all the people away, every man to his house.

10:26 And Saul also went home to Gibeah; and there went with him a band of men, whose hearts God had touched.

10:27 But the children of Belial said, How shall this man save us? And they despised him, and brought no presents. But he held his peace.

“appropriate” appearances. The man stood out physically as a king should, head and shoulders above all others. Even Samuel we now hear echoing this same sentiment. On what basis could they even make such an assessment except according to man’s standard, looking again across the border to what seems to work for the world. And for them, physical might makes right. It feels good to have a fine looking leader as well, one we can be proud of. All of it drawn from the *nonsense* of conventional wisdom.

Vs. 25 – *“The manner of the kingdom”* – Perhaps this was a repeat on some of the warnings Samuel gave in chapter 8. Perhaps he read from the instructions Moses had given in this regard (Deut. 17:14-20).

Vs. 26-27 – *“Saul also went home to Gibeah”* – It was an awkward phase in Israel’s budding monarchy. There was no palace or crown jewels or royal possessions whatsoever. Where else could the newly appointed king go but home to his farm in Gibeah? Though a significant find had been made

for the nation, yet all were still in an attitude of uncertain waiting. There was need for some event to pull the nation together under their new leader.

“How shall this man save us?” – True of every crowd, club, or church, there are the faithful, and there are the critical; those willing to do the work, and those willing to explain how it should not be done; those willing to trust God for great things and get on with it, and those quick to voice the impossibilities. Here too we find;

- The loyal and spoiled.
- The workers and the shirkers.
- The yea-sayers and nay-sayers.
- The sweaters and the fretters.
- The crème de la crème and the carp de la cry-babies.

It is the Lord who points out here which ones are the *“children of Belial”* or worthless fellows.

“But he held his peace” – Saul was wise to not make an issue of disapproval.

11:1-15 – Victory Over Ammon

11:1 Then Nahash the Ammonite came up, and encamped against Jabeshgilead: and all the men of Jabesh said unto Nahash, Make a covenant with us, and we will serve thee.
11:2 And Nahash the Ammonite answered them, On this condition will I make a covenant with you, that I may thrust out all your right eyes, and lay it for a reproach upon all Israel.
11:3 And the elders of Jabesh said unto him, Give us seven days' respite, that we may send messengers unto all the coasts of Israel: and then, if there be no man to save us, we will come out to thee.

Here is now the event that lifted Saul to prominence before the whole nation.

Vs. 1-3 – Apparently not long after the events at Mizpeh the nation of Ammon came against the city of Jabesh to the west of the Jordan in Gilead, a city in the tribal area of Gad. When the helpless elders of Jabesh pled for terms of surrender the king of Ammon demanded that the right eye of all the men be gouged out. This would render them useless as fighters yet still useable as servants. The men of Jabesh, unable to adequately defend themselves, asked for a week in which to appeal to their brothers across the river. Nahash was apparently confident enough that there would be no help since they were a nation without a significant leader, organized government, or army. There was a history behind Ammon's effort. They had laid claim to the land of Gilead years before, when God raised up Jephthah to bring deliverance (Judges 11). Therefore their further, vengeful purpose here to “*lay it for a reproach upon all Israel*”.

11:4 Then came the messengers to Gibeah of Saul, and told the tidings in the ears of the people: and all the people lifted up their voices, and wept.

11:5 And, behold, Saul came after the herd out of the field; and Saul said, What aileth the people that they weep? And they told him the tidings of the men of Jabesh.

11:6 And the Spirit of God came upon Saul when he heard those tidings, and his anger was kindled greatly.

Vs. 4-5 – *“Then came the messengers to Gibeah of Saul”* – Notice Saul’s evident lack of popular support at this point. The word of appeal was not even sent directly to him as we might expect, but *“unto all the coasts of Israel”* (vs. 3) and *“in the ears of the people”* of Saul’s city. The people were weeping over the matter before the king even knew of it. Saul had yet to prove himself as a warrior or to inspire any confidence in anybody. David on the other hand came to leadership from the battlefield, as a proven man of courage.

Vs. 6 – *“And the Spirit of God came upon Saul”* – Again the Spirit’s influence over Saul is prominent. It is much like that phrase repeatedly spoken of Samson as he arose to some mighty deed (Judges 14:6, 19; 15:14-15). It was God lifting Saul to action.

“And his anger was greatly kindled” – Anger is not a sin when used aright, as here, and as Jesus when clearing the temple. Controlled anger is meant to stir us to action and put impetus behind our

11:7 And he took a yoke of oxen, and hewed them in pieces, and sent them throughout all the coasts of Israel by the hands of messengers, saying, Whosoever cometh not forth after Saul and after Samuel, so shall it be done unto his oxen. And the fear of the LORD fell on the people, and they came out with one consent.

righteous initiatives. It was the Spirit of God that moved Saul to great anger in moving the nation to right action.

Vs. 7 – Saul’s approach was quite effective though gruesome. It was an open threat, complete with vivid object lesson, clearly stating, “Your oxen will be like this dripping ox head if you should choose not to join us!” The very fact that he actually cut his own animals to pieces for the desired effect proved his own commitment to the cause. It was a method that worked;

- Because it threatened serious action.
- Because the Lord was sending His fear upon the people as well.
- Because there was a fearful history behind this approach. The last 3 chapters of Judges relate the civil war that developed between Benjamin and the other tribes decades before this. The Gibeah of that day, Saul’s own city, was wicked and given to homosexual sin like Sodom. The concubine of a certain Levite was

11:8 And when he numbered them in Bezek, the children of Israel were three hundred thousand, and the men of Judah thirty thousand.

molested and killed one night in Gibeah. In protest, the Levite actually cut her body into pieces and sent throughout the tribes. A great, earnest host gathered and very nearly wiped out the tribe of Benjamin altogether. The elders became concerned that the few hundred remaining men of Benjamin were not left with any women to propagate the tribe. In their search for an answer it was discovered that none from Jabesh-Gilead had joined in the fight against Benjamin. Thus all of Jabesh-Gilead were put to the sword except 400 women who were given to the men of Benjamin for wives. So this was a method that had worked to good effect in gathering the men of Israel, a method suggesting that all had better come to the party!

Vs. 8 – Consider the results of Saul’s call, with 330,000 men fit to fight. There would have been at least 5 others in women, children, parents, and grandparents for every able-bodied male of an age to fight. Thus there must have been at least 1.65 million Israelites at the time. The land area, including the Transjordan side, was only about 108

11:9 And they said unto the messengers that came, Thus shall ye say unto the men of Jabeshgilead, To morrow, by that time the sun be hot, ye shall have help. And the messengers came and shewed it to the men of Jabesh; and they were glad.
11:10 Therefore the men of Jabesh said, To morrow we will come out unto you, and ye shall do with us all that seemeth good unto you.
11:11 And it was so on the morrow, that Saul put the people in three companies; and they came into the midst of the host in the morning watch, and slew the Ammonites until the heat of the day: and it came to pass, that they which remained were scattered, so that two of them were not left together.

kms x 165 kms, thus some 18,000 sq.kms the total land, indicating about 92 people per sq.km. Now let's think back to that "impossible" number of those dead at Bethshemesh for looking into the ark (6:19). Let us suppose the eager interest developing around the area in that day of limited entertainments might have brought folks from within a 25 kms radius. This would be an area of 1,965 sq.kms x 92 = 180,780 people potentially living in that area. If it was indeed 50,070 who died, this would have buried only 27.7% of the local population.

Vs. 9-10 – The message was sent that they would have deliverance before the sun was hot the next day. On the strength of Saul's promise the men of Jabesh promised Ammon surrender in the morning. Perhaps they wished to cause their attackers to let down their guard in anticipation of an easy victory come daylight.

11:12 And the people said unto Samuel, Who is he that said, Shall Saul reign over us? bring the men, that we may put them to death.

11:13 And Saul said, There shall not a man be put to death this day: for to day the LORD hath wrought salvation in Israel.

Vs. 11 – “*Saul put the people in three companies*” – Saul’s army went through the night and hit the Ammonite encampment at or just before daybreak. “*The morning watch*” was the 4th watch of the night or 3-6 a.m. Saul divided his force in order to attack from three points at once, perhaps seeking by this means to give the impression of an even greater force, sending the enemy into confusion. David would later use the same tactic when fighting Absalom in the same area (II Sam. 18).

Vs. 12-13 – “*Who is he that said, Shall Saul reign over us?*” – All doubts in Saul were swept aside with such a decisive triumph. The faithful side (10:26), now having attained prominence in the flush of victory, wished to execute all doubters, leaving a completely unified following. Yet Saul was wise to neither kill nor criticize opposers (10:27). Benevolent tolerance is a stately ornament for a king, one Saul would later put off when pursuing David’s life. Saul instead turned all hostile thoughts to the Lord’s good work in their salvation.

Vs. 14-15 – “*Come, and let us go to Gilgal*” – Samuel

11:14 Then said Samuel to the people, Come, and let us go to Gilgal, and renew the kingdom there.

11:15 And all the people went to Gilgal; and there they made Saul king before the LORD in Gilgal; and there they sacrificed sacrifices of peace offerings before the LORD; and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly.

quickly took up the occasion to make it a great day of celebration of their victory through the king they had demanded. This was an event to confirm Saul's appointment and sweep aside all doubt across the land.

Consider Samuel's big-hearted nature. With their foolish demand he could have walked away to let them sort themselves out. Yet, as the Lord, he remained with them out of genuine care for his people.

Even so God had always been the adequate protector of His people. They rejected God's direct rule over them. They replaced Him with a man. Yet the Lord continued to bless through their king. The fact that this was a replay of the very same deliverance God "*Himself*" had earlier brought through Jephthah, the son of a harlot, did not seem to dawn on them in their starry-eyed elation over their brilliant king. Men are still the same, more inclined to celebrate awesome men, with their attractive stature, and their stunning abilities and

prophecies and pedigrees, than to celebrate the God of all, who is Creator of all, and so tolerant of all.

Class 8 – I Samuel 12-13

12:1 And Samuel said unto all Israel, Behold, I have hearkened unto your voice in all that ye said unto me, and have made a king over you.

12:2 And now, behold, the king walketh 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.

In chapter 11 we saw the nation of Ammon soundly thumped by a national army Saul effectively called and cleverly led to victory across the river at Jabesh-gilead. That event caused the nation to finally see Saul for the first time as a king worthy of the title. And so, with confidence in their king at its peak, it was time for Samuel to back out of leadership over the nation, certainly from civil leadership.

12:1-25 – Samuel’s Final Words to the Nation

This chapter is similar to Joshua’s final words in chapter 24 of his book.

Vs. 1-2 – “*And Samuel said unto all Israel...*” – It was while at Gilgal in their victory celebration and the happy formal appointment of Saul as king that Samuel spoke to the people (11:14-15).

Vs. 3-5 – “*Witness against me before the LORD*” – Samuel began by holding before the nation his

- 12:3 Behold, here I am: witness against me before the LORD, and before his anointed: whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom 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 you.*
- 12:4 And they said, Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken ought of any man's hand.*
- 12:5 And he said unto them, The LORD is witness against you, and his anointed is witness this day, that ye have not found ought in my hand. And they answered, He is witness.*
-

blamelessness. He knew of his purity of life before them and so did they. It is a beautiful thing to be able to speak this way at the end of a life of service. A man keeping his heart right with God will keep himself from the abuse of men as well. None came forward to accuse Samuel of anything. And so he formally called God and the king to witness to his innocence. Such amazing confidence Samuel had in his own integrity. Daniel was able to claim the same before Darius (Dan. 6:22), and David could declare his innocence when pursued by Saul (Ps. 18:20, 24).

Samuel's words here were meant to highlight the ingratitude of the people in light of his faithful care of them. Though he had never abused them, they had abused him in their demand for a king, which implied failure on his part. Even so with the way they handled the Lord. Though He never abused but ever blessed, yet they had abused Him in refusing His headship over them.

12:6 And 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.

12:7 Now therefore stand still, that I may reason with you before the LORD of all the righteous acts of the LORD, which he did to you and to your fathers.

12:8 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.

12:9 And when they forgot the LORD their God, he sold them into the hand 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.

12:10 And they 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 thee.

Vs. 6-11 – “*Stand still, that I may reason with you*” – Samuel then briefly turned to their history, displaying the Lord’s part in their successes as their great Benefactor;

- He raised up Moses and Aaron to effect their deliverance from Egypt (vs. 6).
- He gave them the Promised Land (vs. 8).
- He used foreign oppressors to discipline them (vs. 9).
- He heard their repentance and cry for help (vs. 10).
- “*And the LORD sent*” deliverers, men who could lead them to victory (vs. 11).

It was always all about the Lord, if they were willing to see it.

12:11 And the LORD sent Jerubbaal, and Bedan, and Jephthah, and Samuel, and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side, and ye dwelled safe.

“*Jerubbaal, and Bedan*” – Jerubbaal means “let Baal plead”. It was a name Gideon’s father called his son when he threw down the altar of Baal and the men of the city wanted to kill him. The point there was that if Baal really were a god he should not need men to do his killing for him. He should be perfectly capable of pleading his own case and dealing with his attackers. Bedan is an unknown. He was either an unrecorded judge (though known to them) or another name for one of those known to us, perhaps Barak.

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On the Side

Compare the leadership of Saul and Gideon;

- Both had God’s assurance that they were called to lead but needed some confirmatory sign to prove it; Gideon the fleece (Jud. 6:36-39) and Saul victory over Ammon.
 - Gideon was in communication with the Lord, but do we ever see Saul really talk to God?
-

12:12 And when ye saw that Nahash the king of the children of Ammon came against you, ye said unto me, Nay; but a king shall reign over us: when the LORD your God was your king.

12:13 Now therefore behold the king whom ye have chosen, and whom ye have desired! and, behold, the LORD hath set a king over you.

Vs. 12 – “*When the LORD your God was your King*” – As the Philistines pressed from the west and the Ammonites came from the east Israel was squeezed in the vice of circumstance, which forced out of them what was in them, revealing where their confidence lay. Rather than turning to the Lord, seeking divine help, they sought only a human solution. And therein was the heart of their evil. Their demand for a king implied that they *recognized no other king* at that point. It seems they needed Samuel to tell them that “*the LORD your God was your King*”.

Vs. 13 – “*Now therefore behold the king*” – Even in receiving a king it was the Lord doing the appointing and giving. Indeed every blessing or benefit coming to them was from above, coming down “*from the Father of lights*”, Giver of “*every good gift and every perfect gift*”. “And now behold! Here he is, your king!” Samuel said. “Even *this* you have received from your gracious God, in spite of your rude and thoughtless slight against Him in demanding it”.

12:14 If ye will fear the LORD, and serve him, and obey his voice, and not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall both ye and also the king that reigneth over you continue following the LORD your God:

12:15 But if ye 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.

12:16 Now therefore stand and see this great thing, which the LORD will do before your eyes.

12:17 Is it not wheat harvest to day? I will call unto the LORD, and he shall send thunder and rain; that ye may perceive and see that your wickedness is great, which ye have done in the sight of the LORD, in asking you a king.

Vs. 14-15 – “*If ye will fear the LORD*” – The answer was not in receiving an earthly king, and all is fixed up with nevermore a worry. *The Lord* is still the key to blessing, no matter what men are trusting for safety. To fear the Lord would lead on to a continued following of both people and king. Notice here that both king and subjects would receive the kind of subjects or king they deserved.

Consider the hope here in vs. 14-15. Blessing would not be a hit and miss thing, depending on whatever kind of king chance might deliver them. Blessing or cursing would still depend on their response to their God (Ezra 8:22).

Vs. 16-18 – An object lesson was provided of a thunderstorm in the harvest season. Wheat harvest was in June, a most unlikely time for rain in Palestine. This must have been either a storm out of the blue or one that developed and passed very quickly to make such an impression upon the

12:18 So Samuel called unto the LORD; and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day: and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel.

12:19 And all the people said unto Samuel, Pray for thy servants unto the LORD thy God, that we die not: for we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king.

12:20 And Samuel said unto the people, Fear not: ye have done all this wickedness: yet turn not aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart;

people. God affirmed Samuel's words through the miraculous in chapter 9-10 as well through fulfilled prophecy. This storm had the specific purpose of confirming the fact that God stood together with Samuel in his assessment of their great wickedness.

“So Samuel called unto the LORD” – It seems Samuel prayed before all, as Elijah on Carmel. God is able to elevate the influence of a man before the people in this way. Compare Joshua 3:7; 4:14.

Vs. 19 – *“Pray for thy servants unto the LORD thy God”* – Their response was good but could have been better. It was to the Lord they should have cried, rather than calling upon Samuel's services. Again, it was still to a man they were looking for help in their time of need.

Vs. 20 – *“Fear not: ye have done all this wickedness”* – God's man did not try to soothe their guilt or repair their fractured self-image. He frankly agreed with their dark self-evaluation. Samuel was not one to hedge on truth or be soft on evil (15:14, 33). Yet

12:21 And turn ye not aside: for then should ye go after vain things, which cannot profit nor deliver; for they are vain.

12:22 For the LORD will not forsake his people for his great name's sake: because it hath pleased the LORD to make you his people.

though brutally blunt concerning their “wickedness”, still it was to their encouragement that he spoke here. Though they could not undo their failure to trust, they could carry on for the Lord and still find His favour. The same is true in every age. Though we have all failed the Lord, and there is no denying this, yet the Lord is still willing to receive any soul who turns from his sin to the Saviour.

Vs. 21 – *“Turn ye not aside”* – Samuel repeated himself on this one (vs. 20). It was his earnest concern that they not just figure all was lost in trying to please the Lord and walk away altogether. There was still hope with their God.

Vs. 22 – *“The LORD will not forsake His people for His great name’s sake”* – Not only would their God be willing to have them back, but He in fact would never altogether forsake them. They are His people, for He was pleased to make them so. And they would always be in a place of special privilege with Him. For God to ever let them go entirely would bring damage upon His own good name, for He has

12:23 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:

12:24 Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things he hath done for you.

12:25 But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king.

made promises to the Jewish nation. It is a damage those of an Amillennial persuasion are willing to allow and even insist upon.

Vs. 23 – Though Samuel was signing off as judge with Saul’s rise, yet his people were bidding him to continue his spiritual work in their behalf. As it should be with one in a priestly role, Samuel would continue to represent their concerns to God. He even considered the failure to pray for them a sin. And not only would Samuel plead for God’s work in and around them, he would continue his teaching work among them as well.

Vs. 24 – *“Consider how great things He hath done for you”* – It is always all about the Lord and our sincere consideration or recognition of Him and His work in our behalf. These had failed to consider Him, yet still they were now called back to that proper focus. In vs. 14 & 24 we find good advice for the way of success in life; to fear and serve in truth with the whole heart and obey and not rebel.

*13:1 Saul reigned one year; and when he had reigned two years over Israel,
13:2 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.*

Vs. 25 – “*But if ye shall still do wickedly...*” – Again Samuel pressed it further that their answer was not in a king or human government but in a righteous walk in the fear of the Lord.

13:1-23 – The Fall of Saul

The folly of confidence in man is now seen in Saul so soon falling to the Lord’s disfavour and rejection.

Vs. 1 – From the 2nd year of his reign and for some 4 decades following Saul reigned as a rejected king. God made this clear even from this early stage.

Vs. 2 – “*Saul chose him three thousand men*” – Saul kept a small permanent force as a national guard, with the rest of the nation ready for his call to arms. This guard was formed as Saul carefully looked for 1st class men (14:52), perhaps through some screening process. Such a small force was probably all that Saul could afford at that stage. There was perhaps some type of taxation system formed to foot the bill.

13:3 And Jonathan smote the garrison of the Philistines that was in Geba, and the Philistines heard of it. And Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, Let the Hebrews hear.

Jonathan must have been young at this stage if this was only in the 2nd year of Saul's reign. There are evident difficulties with the chronology in this portion, which surely have more to do with our lack of knowledge than any errors in the text.

Vs. 3 – “*And Jonathan smote the garrison of the Philistines*” – This garrison or military outpost was mentioned before by Samuel in 10:5. It seems the Philistines held enough control over Israel by that time that they had even stationed fortified posts in the land in order to maintain their hold and keep an eye on any developments. They must have looked with concern upon Saul's solid victory over Ammon, and thus perhaps were not surprised with Israel now turning to flex their muscles against them.

Young Jonathan is an interesting study. There was not the least hesitation in him to confront the enemy, even to the point of coming across a bit rash. We will see the same again in chapter 14. With a small force now at his command, he simply mowed down the local Philistine garrison. They were like a tumour (“*emerod*”) on the land and did not belong

13:4 And all Israel heard say that Saul had smitten a garrison of the Philistines, and that Israel also was had in abomination with the Philistines. And the people were called together after Saul to Gilgal.

there and so the need of the hour was obvious to him. Perhaps it is because of Jonathan's immaturity that he was seemingly without the restraint of a measure of thoughtfulness or subtlety. Certainly he was without fear, and his courage seemingly arising from his faith in God (14:6). This in contrast to the trembling we see so much of in his father. But were they ready to tackle the whole Philistine army? Did Jonathan fully grasp what a flattened outpost would mean? Whether this action was with or without Saul's consent is unclear. It does seem like the two halves of vs. 3 should be the other way around, with the larger national force called and organized before any such move was made.

"Saul blew the trumpet throughout the land" – If Jonathan did not collect on what such an act of aggression would mean, Saul certainly did, and immediately sent the word out to every border calling all troops, for they were now in deep trouble.

Vs. 4 – *"The people were called together after Saul to Gilgal"* – This is now the event Samuel had spoken

- 13:5 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.*
- 13:6 When the men of Israel saw that they were in a strait, (for the people were distressed,) then the people did hide themselves in caves, and in thickets, and in rocks, and in high places, and in pits.*
- 13:7 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.*
-

of in 10:8. It may be Samuel meant that whenever there was a national threat they were to gather at Gilgal and wait for him to come and bless and give direction on how to proceed. God might direct, as He did David, to attack the enemy straight on (II Sam. 5:19), or He might instruct them to hit from behind with the moving of the mulberry trees (II Sam. 5:23-24). It was vital instruction, which Saul minimized by his following actions.

Vs. 5 – *“People as the sand which is on the sea shore in multitude”* – The Philistine force could not have been any greater than the 330,000 with Saul against Ammon. But perhaps, in view of the fear described in vs. 6, this is given from the perspective of the terrified Hebrew nation. There was something particularly scary about those nasty Philistines. Did the people of Israel think that simply by appointing a king he would sort out all such challenges without their help?

Vs. 6-7 – *“Then the people hid themselves”* – As the

13:8 And he tarried seven days, according to the set time that Samuel had appointed: but Samuel came not to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him.

leader, so the followers (10:22). How often we see a cowering Saul, trusting to his own small strength rather than showing any confidence in the greatness of his God. We will later find him and his army in the same sort of predicament before Goliath as well. Men pick up on the attitude of the one over them. Those gathered after Saul were expecting disaster rather than deliverance. Though they had seen their answer in one appointed king, yet still they could find no real confidence in their king when it came down to it.

Vs. 8 – “*And he tarried seven days, according to the set time*” – Here was now the crunch for poor Saul, the supreme test, the trial of revelation to discover what was in him. If there was in him a firm and faithful resolve to simply believe God for what He had spoken, then no pressure could be great enough to drive him to disobedience. But if his faith should be a surface thing, God would have it known. And so Saul was surely under the screws here. The Philistines were gathering in force, and the more time they were given the more established and confident they would become. The fearful men of Israel were scattering to caves and thickets and

13:9 And Saul said, Bring hither a burnt offering to me, and peace offerings. And he offered the burnt offering.

across the river, and the more time given the more of them would disappear into the night. Samuel had given a time limit of 7 days (10:8), but a week seemed an absolute eternity under those conditions. Saul's anger at Samuel might have been a building thing, for not understanding the magnitude of the situation in taking so long. Though Samuel was not untrue to his words.

Again, consider the parallels with Gideon. The attacking Midianites were described in the very same way (Jud. 7:12). God whittled down the numbers on Gideon's side as well, even instructing the release of any who were fearful among them (in Saul's case the king himself must be given leave on this basis!). Gideon of course was left with only 300. The Lord was concerned there *"lest Israel vaunt themselves against Me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me"* (Jud. 7:2). Yet still the Lord gave victory through 300 over a vast multitude. Did Saul know or forget about this part of their history?

Vs. 9 – *"Bring hither a burnt offering to me"* – Saul finally caved under the pressure. By his actions here he was taking upon himself a role God had

13:10 And it came to pass, that as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him, that he might salute him.

reserved for those of Levi, not those of Benjamin. It seems he felt the need for God's blessing on their effort, that this would perhaps hold his drifting troops. Yet how could disobedience ensure God's blessing? Again, understand where Saul was in his heart. He saw his strength in those dwindling soldiers, not in the Lord of hosts. He would offend the true source of his help in an effort to hold a false, earthly hope. Saul's lack of faith was on display. He did not see the Lord for all that He truly is.

Vs. 10 – The *very moment* Saul had completed his illicit sacrifices the word came to him that Samuel was arriving. Saul quickly went out to meet him, rather than letting Samuel find him at the scene of his sin. He went “*that he might salute him*”, with a smile on his face and a blessing on his tongue, like a small boy trying to hide behind his back what he had done. But Samuel already knew. He needed to see no evidence. Saul should have known the futility of cover-ups with Samuel, for this was the *seer*. This was both a failure of Saul's faith and a failure of his integrity at the same time. He was too impatient to just obey and wait. And he was

13:11 And Samuel said, What hast thou done? And Saul said, Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that thou camest not within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered themselves together at Michmash;

dishonest enough to try to hide his crime as well.

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On the Side

How many fall to the carelessness of Saul. Too impatient they are to wait until it is right to have what they want according to God's way and time. And so they drop their standard and take a spouse or partner or business opportunity or some other option that is less than blessed. God may make you wait the full week, until the very extremity of the limit, before bringing His answer. Are you willing to wait? Are you willing to simply say "I will do right"? For those who refuse to wait for God's right, with the impatience of Saul, one failure often leads to another, bringing them down to further shameful actions and cover-ups.

"Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord" (Ps. 27:14).

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Vs. 11-12 – *"What hast thou done?"* – With Samuel's

13:12 Therefore said I, The Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the LORD: I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering.

13:13 And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the LORD have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever.

rebuke Saul was sputtering reasons without repentance; reasons in fact that tended to point the fingers everywhere else but home; the scattering people, the delaying prophet, the gathering Philistines. In vs. 12 he even seems to scatter responsibility within his own personality. Who was to blame then, “I” for forcing “myself”, or “myself” for letting “I” force me? The pride in Saul now comes to the forefront, showing through the surface skim of what seemed humility before. In his pride Saul took it upon himself to disobey, and then refused to simply acknowledge and repent of his wrong. There can be no question that he let circumstance force him to wrong. Regardless of what those circumstances were or who was involved, Saul did wrong! Samuel did not try to force Saul to such an admission. He merely responded to the lack of it.

Vs. 13 – “*For now would the LORD have established thy kingdom...for ever*” – Saul was told not only the wrong of what he had done, but what the Lord might have done for him had he passed the test of faith in

13:14 But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the LORD commanded thee.

this incident. The question of how such a statement squares with God's previous promise concerning David's line (Gen. 49:10) can only be answered in God's all-seeing awareness of the end from the beginning. Yet this cannot be allowed to bleed this might-have-been of all meaning or God is made a liar. Saul might have been but *would* not, and therefore he was responsible and personally faulted here. If it was that he *could* not, then he could not be landed with blame.

Vs. 14 – “*But now thy kingdom shall not continue*” – It was the beginning of the end for Saul. The Lord in fact had already sought for and apparently found and appointed David, “*a man after His own heart*”, though it seems from the time frame given in vs. 1 that David would not have been born yet. Though chronology issues are a bit difficult in this chapter, we are again wise to wait on God for the fuller details in glory.

“*Because thou hast not kept that which the LORD commanded thee*” – God had given clear command through Moses of who should handle such offerings.

13:15 And Samuel arose, and gat him up from Gilgal unto Gibeah of Benjamin. And Saul numbered the people that were present with him, about six hundred men.

13:16 And Saul, and Jonathan his son, and the people that were present with them, abode in Gibeah of Benjamin: but the Philistines encamped in Michmash.

13:17 And the spoilers came out of the camp of the Philistines in three companies: one company turned unto the way that leadeth to Ophrah, unto the land of Shual:

And it was most evident that it was the Lord speaking through Samuel when telling Saul to wait, as demonstrated in all the fulfilled prophecies around Samuel's words. Compare King Uzziah later become a leper through attempting something of the same (II Chron. 26:16ff).

Vs. 15 – Samuel simply walked away, leaving Saul to his own means in dealing with the Philistines; means which amounted to about 600 remaining men. Yet it was twice Gideon's force when defeating a similar host.

Vs. 16 – Saul moved what was left of his army up out of the Jordan Valley to Gibeah, perhaps to put himself close to Samuel, who had gone there (vs. 15). The Philistines gathered themselves at Michmash a few kms to the north.

Vs. 17-18 – *“And the spoilers came out of the camp of the Philistines”* – Three raiding parties were sent out of the Philistine camp in search of any resistance; one went north toward Ophrah, one

13:18 And another company turned the way to Bethhoron: and another company turned to the way of the border that looketh to the valley of Zeboim toward the wilderness.

13:19 Now there was no smith found throughout all the land of Israel: for the Philistines said, Lest the Hebrews make them swords or spears:

13:20 But all the Israelites went down to the Philistines, to sharpen every man his share, and his coulter, and his axe, and his mattock.

went west toward Beth-horon, and the other turned to the east. They were unaware that Saul and company were now positioned just to the south of them. The main body of the attackers remained in Michmash. Since the Philistines did not know where Saul was it seems the purpose of these “spoilers” was to find his force and then direct their attack.

Vs. 19-22 – *“There was no smith found throughout all the land of Israel”* – Here was another serious difficulty that helped to make victory over the Philistines seemingly impossible. In their dominance over the Promised Land, the Philistines had completely disarmed the Hebrew people, even removing their ability to work with metals. Thus battle for Israel in those days was more through the use of sticks, stones, and farm tools. For with their monopoly on metals and metal work the Philistines made Israel completely dependent upon them for access to tools and repair as part of their policy to keep the Hebrew nation under the Philistine thumb.

13:21 Yet they had a file for the mattocks, and for the coulter, and for the forks, and for the axes, and to sharpen the goads.
13:22 So it came to pass in 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 with Saul and with Jonathan his son was there found.

Vs. 22 – “*There was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any*” – To fight the Philistines meant to be seriously “out-gunned”. Thus the statistics comparison was bleak;

	<u>Philistia</u>	<u>Israel</u>
Chariots	30,000	0
Horsemen	6,000	0
Soldiers	sand of sea for number	600
Swords	as many as soldiers	2
Spears	ditto	ditto

That only Saul and Jonathan held swords is what later made Saul the obvious choice to confront Goliath. But again he was left trembling in his own inadequacy, while young David stepped out with confidence in his God.

Vs. 23 – This seems to describe the vast size of the Philistine camp, confidently stretched out at Michmash. Could the odds have looked more impossible? *“Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there anything too hard for Me?”* said the Lord to Jeremiah (32:27). Apparently all except faithful Jonathan were unmindful of the Lord’s smashing victory over this same attacker so many decades before. We are constantly reminded that it just does not matter how many intervening decades there are since the last time the Lord so wonderfully worked. He is still so very able to work in the same wonderful way!

“...there is no restraint
to the LORD
to save by many
or by few”

(1 Sam. 14:6)

Class 9 – I Samuel 14

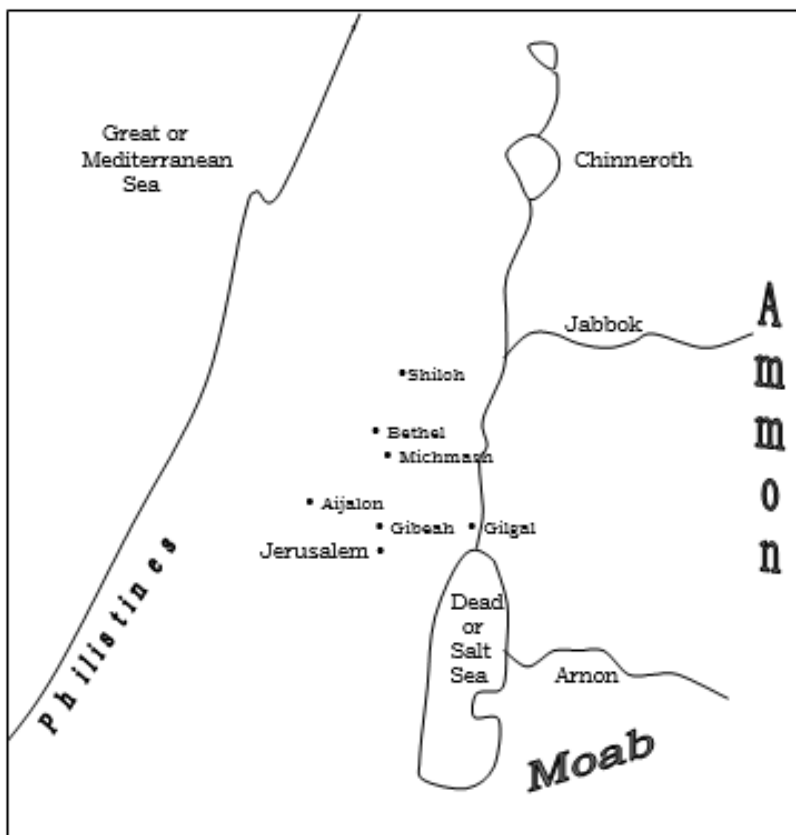
14:1 Now it came to pass upon a day, that Jonathan the son of Saul said unto the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over to the Philistines' garrison, that is on the other side. But he told not his father.

Chapter 13 left King Saul in the most terrible kind of trouble. Not only were the Philistines gathered in the land and searching for him, but his own army had largely scattered from him. And not only was he left with “*about six hundred men*”, but they had no swords or spears with which to fight! And not only were they so thoroughly “out-gunned” on the ground, but Saul had dishonoured the Lord in making offerings in Samuel’s absence and had lost the blessing of his God. He was without help in heaven and upon earth and up against the most impossible odds! The Philistines had even brought many thousands of chariots. Not that these would be of any real use in the hill country of Israel. But they were likely there for the effect, adding a fearful impression to their force. Saul had moved up from Gilgal to Gibeah, just south of the main camp of the Philistines at Michmash (see map on next page).

14:1-18 – Jonathan Begins Victory

Vs. 1-3 – “*Now it came to pass upon a day...*” – “*Upon*

a day” implies there were other days involved while Saul “*tarried*” or waited at Gibeah. Waiting for what? They will later listen daily to the arrogant taunts of Goliath for 40 days (17:15). Again, waiting for what? Those three groups of marauding “*spoilers*” mentioned in 13:17-18 were out raping



- 14:2 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;*
- 14:3 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.*
- 14:4 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 a sharp rock on the other side: and the name of the one was Bozez, and the name of the other Seneh.*
- 14:5 The forefront of the one was situate northward over against Michmash, and the other southward over against Gibeah.*
- 14:6 And Jonathan said to the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these 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.*
-

and pillaging throughout the land, while Saul was responsible to protect the people who had appointed him. And so again it was Saul's son Jonathan who made the moves to force the action. *"But he told not his father"*, perhaps through fear of being called off. It would certainly have been right and proper that the king and General of the Army know what his men were doing. Yet none knew *"that Jonathan was gone"*, perhaps suggesting that he had purposely crept away wanting none to know.

Vs. 4-5 – Such attention is given to the geography, with even the names of significant features provided, yet never is Jonathan's brave armour-bearer even once named.

Vs. 6 – *"Let us go over unto...these uncircumcised"* – The term *"uncircumcised"* comes across a touch derogatory, likely expressing Jonathan's

14:7 And his armourbearer said unto him, Do all that is in thine heart: turn thee; behold, I am with thee according to thy heart.

14:8 Then said Jonathan, Behold, we will pass over unto these men, and we will discover ourselves unto them.

indignation with the Philistine presence. These foreign occupiers had no connection with the true God as did Israel, circumcision being the physical sign of that connection. Compare David's righteous indignation over Goliath's arrogant taunts against "*the armies of the living God*" (17:26).

"There is no restraint to the LORD to save by many or by few" – Jonathan both spoke and demonstrated his true faith in the God who is never limited by human lack.

Vs. 7 – *"I am with thee according to thy heart"* – This servant of Jonathan's was such an endearing fellow, showing greatest loyalty, sacrifice, and courage. In fact he displayed the same traits as his master in this regard. As the other men were trembling after their trembling king, by the same principle behold the bold follower of brave Jonathan. His words are those of true servanthood. What was in his own heart was of no concern. He was willing for anything "*according to thy heart*". Though this armour-bearer is mentioned 8 times in this chapter his name is left unknown to us. He was the

14:9 If they say thus unto us, Tarry until we come to you; then we will stand still in our place, and will not go up unto them.

14:10 But if they say thus, Come up unto us; then we will go up: for the LORD hath delivered them into our hand: and this shall be a sign unto us.

14:11 And both of them discovered themselves unto the garrison of the Philistines: and the Philistines said, Behold, the Hebrews come forth out of the holes where they had hid themselves.

Unknown Soldier, whose name and identity matter less than his character and courage.

Vs. 8-10 – As did Gideon in Judges 6, so Jonathan put out a fleece in seeking God’s direction. Unlike Saul, Jonathan was a man with a plan. Compare David in 20:5ff.

Vs. 11 – *“Both of them discovered themselves”* – They stepped out into the open, revealing themselves to the Philistines. These men did not just *talk* big of what they would do. By faith they actually stepped out and did it! That “Hall of Faith” of Hebrews 11 is all about what faithful men and women got up and *accomplished* by faith! Courage may not be without fear, but it will move forward according to a right plan anyway, though it be the hardest thing one ever does.

“Behold, the Hebrews come forth out of the holes where they had hid themselves” – Words of mockery for the cowardice shown by the men of Israel thus

14:12 And the men of the garrison answered Jonathan and his armourbearer, and said, Come up to us, and we will shew you a thing. And Jonathan said unto his armourbearer, Come up after me: for the LORD hath delivered them into the hand of Israel.
14:13 And Jonathan climbed up upon his hands and upon his feet, and his armourbearer after him: and they fell before Jonathan; and his armourbearer slew after him.

far. And still the victory given that day did not impress with human power or great ability, but with the God who fought with and for men. Only Jonathan and his friend shine among men in this account. See how God is willing to share His glory with those of faithfulness and loyalty.

Vs. 12 – *“Come up after me”* – Jonathan was such an opposite to his father, always leading the way of faith and courage and bidding the other to *“Come...come...come”* after him (vs. 1, 6). The crucial difference between Saul and Jonathan was that Jonathan knew the Lord was with him. Saul never had this assurance, and so every confrontation he must fearfully face on his own.

“The LORD hath delivered them” – Had God actually communicated this assurance to Jonathan? Or did the Lord pick up on Jonathan’s plan and willingly follow, as with the return of the ark in chapter 6?

Vs. 13 – *“And Jonathan climbed up”* – It is evident that the Philistines were above the valley or ravine

where Jonathan and his armour-bearer stepped out of hiding. In fact, so steep was the grade up to them that it was necessary to climb up on all fours. Perhaps the Philistines did not attack Jonathan as they made their ascent because they presumed them to be more defectors (vs. 21) rather than coming with hostile intent. Though the Philistines held every advantage yet the Lord gave His faithful one the beginning of victory there.

“And they fell before Jonathan” – It seems Jonathan simply waded right in without small talk. One after the other he began putting them down, while his armour-bearer came behind making sure they never got back up again. It would have perhaps been a terrifying reminder to the Philistines of stories they had heard of a strong man named Samson who, filled with the Spirit, had killed a thousand of them on a similar hilltop with a donkey’s jawbone (Judges 15). It spoke again of how Israel did not need to be on the same level with their enemies in weaponry or manpower. With God, with the Spirit, one man armed only with a bone is quite enough!

As David with Goliath, once the initial victory was won the problem as a whole simply dissolved before them. In the Lord’s battles He often does not remove us entirely from the difficult confrontations

14:14 And that first slaughter, which Jonathan and his armourbearer made, was about twenty men, within as it were an half acre of land, which a yoke of oxen might plow.

14:15 And there was trembling in the host, in 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.

for Him. But with our faithful action He then steps in to scatter the daunting foe before us. Just get up and begin to do right and leave the rest with Him.

Vs. 14 – “*About twenty men, within as it were an half acre of land*” – This description is perhaps meant to give a feel for the insignificance of this initial encounter in comparison to the whole task which God then so deftly handled all by Himself.

Vs. 15 – “*It was a very great trembling*” – In the Hebrew the phrase is literally “a trembling of God”. It was the Lord stepping in to do the lion’s share of the work, as in chapter 7. Compare the helping hailstones falling to Joshua’s aid (Josh. 10:11). Though the Philistines were far from impressed with the people of God, they could not help but be impressed with their God. It is likely what won the hearts of men like Ittai the Gittite and the 600 from Gath who were faithful to David (II Sam. 15:18-22). Oh the grace of God to be fishing for souls among those hated “*uncircumcised*”!

14:16 And the watchmen of Saul in Gibeah of Benjamin looked; and, behold, the multitude melted away, and they went on beating down one another.

14:17 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.

14:18 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.

Vs. 16 – *“And behold, the multitude melted away”* – While Saul was tarrying and wringing his hands with his watchmen watching, Jonathan was out giving them something to watch, as the Philistine host simply imploded before their eyes. Some watch and wait, some whinge and worry, some work and win, believing God for great things.

Vs. 17 – *“Number now, and see who is gone from us”* – Saul was immediately suspicious of someone from among them causing this strange event (the event for which he had been waiting perhaps?). He should have suspected Jonathan’s involvement. His son was a bit of an unruly firebrand, though there was a lot that was right in his heart. So Saul did a roll call to find who was missing from their ranks. Why? What is the point? Why not just get out there and join the fray?

Vs. 18 – *“Bring hither the ark of God”* – Would he bring the ark to talk to God through it? Why did he need that? See how they had fallen back to the

14:19 And it came to pass, while Saul talked unto the priest, that the noise that was in the host of the Philistines went on and increased: and Saul said unto the priest, Withdraw thine hand.

14:20 And 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.

same superstitious trust in the ark, as some kind of assurance of the Lord's presence. Men need such props only when they know in their heart that they do not have the Lord with them.

14:19-23 – Others Join

Vs. 19 – “*Withdraw thine hand*” – Even as Saul was speaking to the priest the volume increased from the Philistine camp. It became evident that something significant was happening over there. So Saul then made the decision that he need not seek guidance from the Lord with the sound of victory in the air, and he called the priest off from making any enquiry. Seems there was no time for that now. Yet is there ever a time when we do not need the Lord's guidance? Was it wisdom in Saul to be too busy, too distracted with things on the ground to live in God's bosom?

Vs. 20 – “*Every man's sword was against his fellow*” – See God's grace here as well. In spite of Saul's

14:21 Moreover the Hebrews that were with the Philistines before that time, 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.

14:22 Likewise all the men of Israel which had hid themselves in mount Ephraim, when they heard that the Philistines fled, even they also followed hard after them in the battle.

distraction and neglect of the Lord he was given the victory anyway.

Confusion and panic within the vast Philistine host led to blind self-destruction. How very common this method when God is giving victory to His people, and how easily stirred. In fact the larger and more intimidating the host the easier it is to take them apart in this manner. God did not need swords in Israelite hands when He can turn armed Philistines against each other.

Vs. 21-22– Deserters and draft-dodgers – Those who were loyal only to the winning side quickly crossed over to join in with this new stunning development. And those loyal only to themselves were drawn in to the pursuit of victory and spoils as well. What we see here is true at all times. Those who say “impossible” at the first quickly join when the tide turns and the Lord brings the impossible, making themselves a part of the victory and talking up their courage. Some want spoils and honours without threat or sacrifice, in contrast to those who are in

*14:23 So the LORD saved Israel that day: and the battle passed over unto Bethaven.
14:24 And the men of Israel were distressed that day: for Saul had adjured the people,
saying, Cursed be the man that eateth any food until evening, that I may be avenged on
mine enemies. So none of the people tasted any food.*

from the beginning, even when all seems lost, who follow principle to the death, rather than whatever seems to work or win for the moment. Compare the few who later followed David when fleeing from Saul, and then those of Judah who clung to David in the days of Absalom's treason. The sheepish crowd, the mindless masses, generally follow whatever seems to work and win. The righteous few follow what is right, regardless of risks or returns.

Vs. 23 – “*So the LORD saved Israel that day*” – It was the Lord and not the king who saved the day.

Beth-aven probably referred to Bethel to the northwest (I Ki. 12:26-33; Hos. 10:5). The battle followed the Philistine flight toward their home border.

14:24-35 – Saul's Rash Vow

Vs. 24 – This vow and curse was a rather strange thing. With a ban placed on all eating until evening, it seems it was a bit like fasting, though no direct appeal to God was involved. Penalties were not

*14:25 And all they of the land came to a wood; and there was honey upon the ground.
14:26 And when the people were come into the wood, behold, the honey dropped; but no man put his hand to his mouth: for the people feared the oath.
14:27 But Jonathan heard not when his father charged the people with the oath: wherefore he put forth the end of the rod that was in his hand, and dipped it in an honeycomb, and put his hand to his mouth; and his eyes were enlightened.
14:28 Then answered one of the people, and said, Thy father straitly charged the people with an oath, saying, Cursed be the man that eateth any food this day. And the people were faint.*

specified, though death upon violation was implied. This comes across as a rather foolish, meaningless, unnecessary sacrifice. How much farther Saul's men might have gone if able to eat something of the spoils along the way.

Principle – Taking some time to take in sends the Lord's servants much farther and increases the damage to the enemy. Take time to feed your soul with the milk and meat of God's Word, lest you become faint and distressed.

Vs. 25-26 – *“Behold, the honey dropped”* – These events apparently took place while in pursuit of the Philistine host to the west. In a certain wooded location a beehive was actually exposed and the honey was dropping to the ground, even dripping onto some of the passing men. But none dared even to lick it off for fear of Saul's oath.

Vs. 27-28 – *“But Jonathan heard not”* – Jonathan

14:29 Then said Jonathan, My father hath troubled the land: see, I pray you, how mine eyes have been enlightened, because I tasted a little of this honey.

14:30 How much more, if haply the people had eaten freely to day of the spoil of their enemies which they found? for had there not been now a much greater slaughter among the Philistines?

was out saving the nation when Saul spoke his oath, and so he was not aware of it. His mouthful of honey had a physically reviving effect, highlighting the need of such intake and the foolishness of Saul's vow. Somebody who saw Jonathan's actions quickly spoke a word of warning to him.

Consider how in the moment of Jonathan's eating he was like one partaking of the sweetness of sin. The forbidden deed was already done and there was no reversing it, bringing God's anathema upon the offender, who must eventually be found out, whether he fully perceived the wrong of his action or not.

Vs. 29-30 – *“My father hath troubled the land”* – Jonathan quite freely spoke against the king's oath. Though it was indeed a foolish thing for Saul to do, this too was a wrong response in his son. Did Jonathan think he had special privilege to slander the king's decree because Saul was his father?

14:31 And they smote the Philistines that day from Michmash to Aijalon: and the people were very faint.

14:32 And the people flew upon the spoil, and took sheep, and oxen, and calves, and slew them on the ground: and the people did eat them with the blood.

14:33 Then they told Saul, saying, Behold, the people sin against the LORD, in that they eat with the blood. And he said, Ye have transgressed: roll a great stone unto me this day.

Vs. 31 – *“And the people were very faint”* – Again the point is made of their weakness through hunger. Their pursuit of the Philistines from Michmash northwest toward Bethel and then southwest to Aijalon involved over a 30 km run.

Vs. 32 – *“The people flew upon the spoil”* – When evening came, with the end of Saul’s curse, there was such haste in their hunger in preparing meat to eat that God’s laws were ignored and the animals were handled improperly. Compare Leviticus 17:10-14. Again, just as the leader was largely unconcerned with what pleased the Lord, so the followers. This was partly Saul’s fault for his foolish oath. It is interesting to see how carefully the people kept the command of their earthly king, and yet they would disregard the commands of their heavenly King. Even so Saul was willing to follow the wishes of the people but not the will of God. It all depends on who you really fear.

Vs. 33-34 – *“Roll a great stone unto me this day”* – Saul wisely took firm control of the situation in

14:34 And Saul said, Disperse yourselves among the people, and say unto them, Bring me hither every man his ox, and every man his sheep, and slay them here, and eat; and sin not against the LORD in eating with the blood. And all the people brought every man his ox with him that night, and slew them there.

14:35 And Saul built an altar unto the LORD: the same was the first altar that he built unto the LORD.

14:36 And Saul said, Let us go down after the Philistines by night, and spoil them until the morning light, and let us not leave a man of them. And they said, Do whatsoever seemeth good unto thee. Then said the priest, Let us draw near hither unto God.

making sure all animals were slaughtered in the proper manner. Apparently the stone provided a raised surface from which to drain the blood from the slaughtered animals. Some want to make this great stone a place of sacrifice, but there is no indication of this. The purpose here was to ensure that the animals were slaughtered in the correct manner.

Vs. 35 – “*Saul built an altar unto the LORD*” – As at Gilgal before (11:13), in times of great deliverance Saul would honour the Lord. Saul’s great flaw was that the Lord and His pleasure was only ever a good times thing, a marginal concern.

14:36-46 – Jonathan Rescued

Vs. 36 – “*Let us go down after the Philistines by night*” – After the example of Joshua, who hounded their fleeing enemies until he had broken the back of their power, even so Saul was wise to pursue the

14:37 And Saul asked counsel of God, Shall I go down after the Philistines? wilt thou deliver them into the hand of Israel? But he answered him not that day.

Philistine army until that very difficult enemy was thoroughly crushed. Because he failed here they would later be back to hound him, and would continue all the years of his reign until they finally took him in the end.

“Let us draw near hither unto God” – It was the priest who now called their attention to what should have been a central concern all along. He would not have the Lord again left out of such a crucial decision as before.

Vs. 37 – *“He answered him not that day”* – Saul was correct to recognize in God’s refusal to answer an indication of something wrong. Whenever our God goes “quiet”, no longer dealing with us or working through us, it is a time to seek an answer to the question of what might be wrong. Because Saul was never really concerned about what the Lord had said, therefore the Lord was never really concerned to speak to him when he made request (28:6, 15; 8:18). It is a common biblical principle. If we display in our lives little interest in the details of God’s words when He is speaking to us we will find little of His will when we are asking it of Him. If we

14:38 And Saul said, Draw ye near hither, all the chief of the people: and know and see wherein this sin hath been this day.

14:39 For, as the LORD liveth, which saveth Israel, though it be in Jonathan my son, he shall surely die. But there was not a man among all the people that answered him.

have no real interest in what He has already revealed how can we expect Him to readily reveal more when we find ourselves in need?

Vs. 38-39 – This scene is after the practice of Joshua when suffering defeat at Ai (Josh. 7). And as Saul sought for the “Achan” among them he spoke another oath, unknowingly condemning Jonathan to death. It was shades of Jephthah’s rash oath (Judges 11). In many ways the situation here was not as at Ai. Saul seems to have lost track of the fact that they had won a great victory that day. There was no loss, only gain! Yet Saul was taking this too seriously. He would honour his own words with overboard seriousness while not honouring *God’s* words, just as his followers had done.

“There was not a man among all the people that answered him” – Nobody was telling on Jonathan, though at least one was aware of his violation. Obviously all held Jonathan in respect over his father at that point.

14:40 Then said he unto all Israel, Be ye on one side, and I and Jonathan my son will be on the other side. And the people said unto Saul, Do what seemeth good unto thee.
14:41 Therefore Saul said unto the LORD God of Israel, Give a perfect lot. And Saul and Jonathan were taken: but the people escaped.
14:42 And Saul said, Cast lots between me and Jonathan my son. And Jonathan was taken.
14:43 Then Saul said to Jonathan, Tell me what thou hast done. And Jonathan told him, and said, I did but taste a little honey with the end of the rod that was in mine hand, and, lo, I must die.

Vs. 40-41 – *“Give a perfect lot”* – Here is about the extent of Saul’s prayer life, calling on God to help hunt down the sinner, when he himself would so easily disregard God’s law without repentance. Saul suddenly became quite a campaigner against the sins of others here, which are always much easier to recognize than our own sin. Perhaps in so doing he wished to diminish his own transgressions and show himself the leader?

Vs. 42-43 – *“Tell me what thou hast done”* – Saul’s words were similar to Joshua’s confrontation at Ai (Josh. 7:19). Though Jonathan might effectively argue that he was out saving the day when Saul’s foolish oath was made and that he honestly did not know, yet he made no attempt to excuse himself in the least, but spoke true. As he was courageous to face the Philistines so he showed the same boldness to face death from his father’s hand. Compare Isaac’s quiet compliance on Mt. Moriah (Gen. 22).

14:44 And Saul answered, God do so and more also: for thou shalt surely die, Jonathan.

14:45 And the people said unto Saul, Shall Jonathan die, who hath 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 hath wrought with God this day. So the people rescued Jonathan, that he died not.

Vs. 44 – *“For thou shalt surely die, Jonathan”* – With an oath Saul pronounced his son’s condemnation, fully committed to carrying out his threat. Again Saul was losing the plot, that Jonathan was the hero on a day of great victory. Saul would later feel threatened by David’s courage and success. Was he resenting the same here in his own son, this perhaps contributing to his willingness to follow through on his irrational threat?

Vs. 45 – *“There shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground”* – Do you hear the bold tone in the words of Saul’s men here? They were not asking or pleading with their king. With an oath they were telling the king the way things would be handled! And Saul quietly consented to their demand. Perhaps, as David with Abigail, Saul recognized the good sense in their words.

Saul appears such a fool throughout this event; through his hesitancy and foolish vows, and then through circumstances that did not allow him to carry out his words. Young Jonathan shows

14:46 Then Saul went up from following the Philistines: and the Philistines went to their own place.

14:47 So Saul took the kingdom over Israel, and fought against all his enemies on every side, against Moab, and against 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.

14:48 And he gathered an host, and smote the Amalekites, and delivered Israel out of the hands of them that spoiled them.

himself more the leader, though he was actually a poor follower; through his secret insubordination and reproach of his father's leadership. In another context Jonathan might have gone far.

See how Saul was more impressive and effective among men when he had God's blessing upon him. But once he was rejected he found it more difficult to be effective with men in many ways. When a man walks with God in righteousness, it is God who lifts him to usefulness and even makes him notable among men. Compare Psalm 37:6 & 91:14-15.

Vs. 46 – “*Then Saul went up from following the Philistines*” – Saul's proposal of a night-time pursuit apparently fell flat in the process, and the Philistines escaped with Jonathan, since an answer never was received from God on the question of pursuit.

14:47-52 – Foe and Family Review

14:49 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 Michal:

14:50 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.

14:51 And Kish was the father of Saul; and Ner the father of Abner was the son of Abiel.

14:52 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 him.

Vs. 47-48 – Saul’s foes – Saul was used of the Lord in providing Israel with a secure existence in their land, becoming the nation’s deliverer.

Vs. 49-51 – Saul’s family – Unlike many of the kings to follow, Saul had only one wife.

“Abner, the son Ner, Saul’s uncle” – According to I Chronicles 8:33, Ner was the father of Kish and grandfather of Saul. We are told here that Abner, captain of Saul’s army, was also a son of Ner, and thus Abner was the brother of Saul’s father. The phrase *“Saul’s uncle”* here must also refer to Abner rather than to Ner.

Vs. 52 – *“There was sore war against the Philistines all the days of Saul”* – Had they hit the Philistines with a more devastating blow at the outset, and even followed through into their own country, we might not have found this verse. Go to the trouble of dealing decisively with the things you face and they will be less likely to come back to haunt you

later, and you will be freed to focus your efforts more fully on other tasks. Do a half-way job and you will soon be facing several fronts at once, finding it necessary to juggle many an annoying hassle.

“What meaneth then
this bleating of the sheep
in mine ears,
and the lowing of the oxen
which I hear?”

(1 Sam. 15:14)

Class 10 – I Samuel 15

15:1 Samuel also said unto Saul, The LORD sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel: now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the LORD.

This chapter expands on the summary statement of 14:48 concerning Amalek. The details of this particular campaign are given and not the others (14:47) because this one involved another important test, again failed by King Saul.

15:1-9 – Saul’s Partial Obedience

Vs. 1 – *“Therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the LORD”* – Samuel made it very clear that he brought the Lord’s words and will to Saul in assigning this task, just as there could be no question that it was the Lord who had appointed Saul at the first through Samuel’s words. *“Therefore”* Saul was carefully warned here at the outset to hear what the Lord was telling him. It was where Saul had failed before. And with such a solemn challenge his resolve should have been stirred to do a proper job of obedience this time. Out of simple recognition of God’s grace in appointing him king, which had become a rewarding thing for Saul, he should have been ready

15:2 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt.

to hear and obey the One who had so graced him.

Vs. 2 – *“I remember that which Amalek did to Israel”* – The Amalekites were descendants of Esau who lived in the Negev to the southwest of Edom (Gen. 36:12). Exodus 17 records the attack of Amalek on the nation of Israel as they were making their way to Sinai. Joshua successfully defended Israel there as Moses held up his hands to God with the help of Aaron and Hur. And God then made a vow that He would *“utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven”* (Ex. 17:14). When Moses later rehearsed the event to the new generation he explained how Amalek *“smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary; and he feared not God”* (Deut. 25:17-19). It was not only that Amalek attacked Israel that moved the Lord to His vow. It was the vicious and cowardly manner in which they did it as well. Though now centuries later, God would keep His promise. Whether in joy or judgment there comes a moment when God says *“I remember”*, and He follows through precisely according to what He has promised or warned. It is the very greatest of good news for those who love Him. It is the very

15:3 Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.
15:4 And Saul gathered the people together, and numbered them in Telaim, two hundred thousand footmen, and ten thousand men of Judah.

worst of bad news for those who will not have Him according to His way. Amalek dared to touch God in touching His people, and for this they would answer to God! He has promised His curse upon all who curse His people or dare to touch them (Gen. 12:3). His promise He will surely remember. It is a promise that still holds all of the force today that it did in that day.

Vs. 3 – *“Go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have”* – The instructions were clear and concise. God underscored His purpose both from a positive and negative direction. They were to utterly destroy and spare none. And then He gave a detailed list to further highlight the extent of His meaning. This was not to be taken in any kind of general or symbolic sense but quite literally. The entire race of Amalek was wholly dedicated to destruction, as the Canaanites in the conquest of the land. Even all the animals were to be destroyed as well, as at Jericho. Nothing breathing was to be left alive. How very easy it would have been for normal men to find reasons not to carry out so harsh an assignment, both from a desire to mercy

15:5 And Saul came to a city of Amalek, and laid wait in the valley.

15:6 And Saul said unto the Kenites, Go, depart, get you down from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them: for ye shewed kindness to all the children of Israel, when they came up out of Egypt. So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites.

the weak and from a selfish desire for personal profit. And though such a task might seem rather harsh it is just another example of the Lord's righteous dealing with sinful mankind, as in the Flood and Sodom and in the conquest of Canaan. No soul deserves God's mercy, but only His wrath. Therefore the Just One cannot be questioned when He brings what every soul deserves. He can only be thanked for not bringing even now on every soul what we deserve.

Vs. 5-6 – The Kenites descended from the father-in-law of Moses (Judges 1:16; 4:11). They had been friendly with Israel in their journey through the wilderness and had joined them in entering the land. Most of them settled in Judah and to the south, though Heber had moved north near the Sea of Galilee. It was Heber's wife, Jael, who sided with Israel in pegging Sisera to the ground when he fought against Barak and Deborah (Judges 4). This was a thoughtful gesture on Saul's part toward a people who had shown themselves friendly to Israel. God is good to remember and bless those who honour His people. God is just to remember and

15:7 And Saul smote the Amalekites from Havilah until thou comest to Shur, that is over against Egypt.

15:8 And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword.

curse those who would harm His people. Both themes are seen together in this account.

Vs. 7 – *“From Havilah until thou comest to Shur”* – This was a common phrase referring to the wilderness area south of Palestine and extending west toward the border of Egypt (modern Suez Canal). This was no small area and would have involved a lengthy campaign covering hundreds of kilometres. In fact it was an area comparable to that conquered by Joshua in the conquest. This would have involved months of hard labour. And none of it for any personal gain for those involved, but all purely out of obedience to the Lord and for His honour and name. Do you get the picture? We can well imagine how difficult such a task would have been, especially for those not personally committed to the Lord and His purposes.

Vs. 8 – *“He took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive”* – For the most part the report sounds good at first, apart from their preservation of Agag. Bringing this man back with them must have represented a kind of trophy, likely as a proof to all

15:9 But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them: but every thing that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly.

of their great success to the south. Again, what was important to Saul was appearance before people over the Lord's pleasure. And why do the Amalekites still feature later in David's day if Saul did a proper job here? See 27:8 & 30:11.

Vs. 9 – “*But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best*” – They “*spared*” what the Lord had strictly said “*spare them not*” (vs. 3). Saul will later point the finger of blame to the people, but the Lord states here that it was in fact “*Saul and the people*”. Saul and those who followed him were quite happy to obey the Lord in those aspects that were easy to obey. But when it came to the difficult aspects, involving real personal sacrifice and loss, their “obedience” became a bit leaky. Yet in keeping for themselves what was marked for complete destruction they were actually involving themselves in Achan's sin. To touch things so forbidden brought death in his case, highlighting how loathsome a fault this was to God (Josh. 7:15). Could they not see the obvious parallels? Saul's awareness of their national history at times comes out in his words (vs. 6). Yet he seems to hold close

15:10 Then came the word of the LORD unto Samuel, saying,

15:11 It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king; for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the LORD all night.

those historical directives not involving personal hardships. But when it got hard he got forgetful. Is it any different with us? We too can get forgetful, excusing and justifying when it comes to things we suspect to be wrong but really wish to do.

“And would not utterly destroy them” – “Would not” suggests purposeful choice. Nobody makes such choices against what they know or suspect to be the Lord’s will without dire consequences.

15:10-35 – God’s Rebuke through Samuel

The Lord again went to Samuel with His concern and message for Saul, because He knew Samuel would faithfully speak all that He would have him to speak. Because He knew Samuel was a man who *would* indeed carry out His assignment completely, no matter how difficult.

Vs. 10-11 – *“It repenteth Me that I have set up Saul to be king”* – Though God is sovereign He clearly moves and is moved with the decisions of men. He felt sorrow for Saul’s direction and sorry that He had

15:12 And when Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning, it was told Samuel, saying, Saul came to Carmel, and, behold, he set him up a place, and is gone about, and passed on, and gone down to Gilgal.

placed him as king (vs. 35).

“He is turned back...hath not performed My commandments” – How very strong the Lord’s words for a man who left ease and travelled far, giving many months of his life to do mostly all he was commanded of God to do. Yet he who keeps the whole law, offending only in one point, is guilty of all (James 2:10). God does not work according to a “close enough” sort of mentality. The least violation of His will makes one an offender. God entered the tabernacle only after Moses put every aspect right *“as the LORD commanded Moses”* (Ex. 40). He would speak to Abram as He wished to do only when Lot was gone and thus every aspect of His command at last fulfilled (Gen. 12-13). It is all or nothing with God. He does not meet sinful mankind or pagan religion half way. It is all God’s way or no way! Compare Hezekiah’s success in II Kings 18:6, and the reasons why.

Vs. 12 – *“Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning”* – Though Samuel cared for Saul and wept before the Lord for him all night, yet again he was

quick to do the hard task of speaking the Lord's rebuke in the morning. It was his way from the day his ministry years began with the same kind of early morning task in chapter 3. The obedient may find such tasks difficult, but they will follow in spite of every kind of reason why not.

“Saul came to Carmel” – This was not Mt. Carmel, but the city of Carmel, south of Hebron, where Nabal and Abigail lived (I Sam. 25).

“Behold, he set him up a place” – This is an interesting phrase. In the Hebrew behind the English translation it is literally “And behold setting up to him a hand”. It obviously was something Saul set up or erected there at Carmel. And it was something erected to or for himself. The Hebrew word for “hand” sometimes refers to a sign or monument, perhaps in the sense of a pointer. Even the New King James Version makes the change here from *“place”* to *“monument”*. It seems Saul, upon returning from this task, actually erected some type of memorial to himself, that men might remember the great things he accomplished there to the south. Was it his doing, or the Lord's? Was Saul to be remembered, or the Lord? Did other great leaders of Israel ever do this sort of thing? Apart from vain Absalom (II Sam. 18:18). It was not a good sign.

15:13 And Samuel came to Saul: and Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of the LORD: I have performed the commandment of the LORD.

15:14 And Samuel said, What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?

15:15 And Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed.

Vs. 13 – *“I have performed the commandment of the LORD”* – “Have you really Saul?” Samuel caught up with Saul down at Gilgal, and Saul met him again with bright greetings (13:10). In both meetings at Gilgal in chapters 13 & 15 Saul foolishly attempted to hide reality from God’s seer.

Vs. 14 – *“What meaneth then this bleating of sheep”* – Samuel went straight to the point, wasting no time with small talk. Though God’s instructions had been quite explicit, the evidence of Saul’s failure was in the sights and sounds and smells all around them. And what might Jesus find if He came to visit each room of the house of your existence?

Vs. 15 – *“The people spared the best of the sheep”* – As in chapter 13, Saul was without repentance. Though the Lord had already put the finger on *“Saul and the people”* (vs. 9), Saul would shift the blame to *“the people”* only, as if they were a power comparable to kingly rule. Who was king here? In justifying himself Saul blamed the people, and in

15:16 Then Samuel said unto Saul, Stay, and I will tell thee what the LORD hath said to me this night. And he said unto him, Say on.
15:17 And Samuel said, When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the LORD anointed thee king over Israel?
15:18 And the LORD sent thee on a journey, and said, Go and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed.

justifying the people he suggested it was all for the Lord. Again, as before, Saul would disobey *for the Lord*, when the obvious reality was that it was for the people, and really for himself. In what kind of backward religion did Saul believe, that would propose disobeying the Lord for the Lord? And what kind of an idiot did he think Samuel was to not perceive the selfishness hidden under the religious cloak here? What an insult to that wise old man of God to even suggest it! Saul would *use* God and His worship as a “*cloak of covetousness*”, and abuse His faithful servant in serving himself!

Vs. 16-19 – “*When thou wast little in thine own sight*” – Saul was appointed back when he seemed to display humility (9:21). But then came his rise to popularity with success over all enemies. And he is now building monuments to himself, and reading God’s clear commands according to his *own* personal pleasure, and thinking to hide the truth from God and His seer. Gone was the humble man Samuel once knew. It is a rare individual who can handle success without a heart departure from

15:19 Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the LORD, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the LORD?

humble dependence on God. Samuel was one who did, while Saul was not! Compare King Uzziah, who *“was marvellously helped, till he was strong. But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction”* (II Chron. 26:15-16). Compare Jeshurun, who *“waxed fat”* and then *“forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation”* (Deut. 32:16). Compare Satan, whose *“heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness”* (Ezek. 28:17). It was the Lord who made Saul head and who anointed him king. It was the Lord who gave him all that had, now gone to his head. It was the Lord who gave him the straightforward assignment to deal appropriately with the Amalekites. And it was the Lord Saul spurned in failing to do as he was told.

“But didst fly upon the spoil” – Saul said, “No, it was for the Lord!” But the Lord said, “No, it was for you!” Though a great percentage of what they did in the south was in obedience to God’s command, yet the small portion of it done against God’s will made their actions *“evil in the sight of the LORD”*. When

15:20 And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and have gone the way which the LORD sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites.

15:21 But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God in Gilgal.

that which is defiled, no matter how small, touches that which is holy, no matter how great, the holy is defiled by the unholy (Hag. 2:11-14). Just a little bit of evil added to an otherwise good performance or existence defiles the whole.

Vs. 20-21 – “*Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the LORD*” – While still insisting upon his own innocence Saul began to allow admissions of wrong to slip out. He would highlight the aspects he did right in that they had “*utterly destroyed the Amalekites*”, yet he admitted to bringing home their king. And he acknowledged that though “*the people*” had collected spoils, these “*should have been utterly destroyed*”. We are making progress, but why must it be dragged out of him? Until one is willing to come clean with full confession of wrong there can be neither help nor healing.

Notice the disheartening little pronoun in vs. 21 as well. Saul did not speak of the “the LORD my God” but of the “*the LORD thy God*”. In this he conceded distance between his soul and God.

15:22 And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

15:23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king.

Vs. 22-23 – *“Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice”*

– It is a principle Samuel states here, on the way to finding the Lord’s pleasure. Many a manmade religion involves great sacrifice and self-punishments in the effort to win God’s pleasure. But every such endeavour cannot succeed if not according to God’s words. Only a heart that honestly, earnestly looks to the true God and His way, as given in His eternal words, can ever succeed in finding His pleasure. Remember how Cain, in an act of religious worship, went to great effort and sacrifice to put together a significant offering for the Lord. But it was completely rejected, winning *“no respect”* from God whatsoever (Gen. 4:5). Because it was not according to His words. The Lord seeks those who will actually hear Him with a will to obey.

“Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft” – In God’s eyes the stubborn refusal to submit to authority is on a par with witchcraft or other occult practices. Saul might as well be involved in idolatry in his stubborn, part-way obedience that was really no obedience at all, for in so doing God was not his God! Would you

15:24 And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice.

15:25 Now therefore, I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD.

freak out if you discovered your child was involved in witchcraft? Yet we tend to overlook rebellion in them. We often justify such as just a stage teens go through in finding their feet and coming to independence. But God sees it the same as if they were practicing witchcraft or idolatry in our home!

“He hath also rejected thee from being king” – God looked upon Saul’s refusal to fully obey Him as a practical rejection of His words. To so reject the words of God is to reject the God of the words. And therefore Saul was at last rejected in return.

Vs. 24-25 – *“I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD”* – Saul finally revealed what he had known to be true all along but was trying to cover up through dishonesty, expressing the *lie* of his opening words to Samuel (vs. 13). He was not pointing fingers at others anymore but spoke only of his own sin. He knew the Lord’s command. He knew he had not fully obeyed. Why did he not know that this confrontation was coming? Why risk it?

“Because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice”

15:26 And Samuel said unto Saul, I will not return with thee: for thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD hath rejected thee from being king over Israel.

– The reason. Saul was more afraid of the people than of the Lord. As before, he was more afraid of losing the support of his men than of his God. It is why he violated God’s law in offering sacrifices in chapter 13. It seems Saul could do without the Lord, but not without the people.

“Turn again with me” – Somehow Saul always aborted on his move toward repentance. Still again he comes short of it here! Rather than just simply turning to God in sincere confession and genuine repentance for his evil, see how it now turns to the matter of maintaining Samuel’s association with him (vs. 30). Saul so greatly feared losing the support both of the people and of the prophet. He seems to want to ignore the details of the Lord’s commands and yet try to fool Samuel into believing he was okay. He saw in Samuel’s continued support the way to the continued popular support of the people. Thus in reality he sought to use God’s prophet to this end.

Vs. 26 – *“I will not return with thee”* – Samuel had had quite enough of the empty endorsement game. Saul was playing with Samuel’s honour and playing

15:27 And as Samuel turned about to go away, he laid hold upon the skirt of his mantle, and it rent.

15:28 And Samuel said unto him, The LORD hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, that is better than thou.

15:29 And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he is not a man, that he should repent.

games with God. So again Samuel repeated his words of rejection as in vs. 23 and turned to walk away. Understand that the repeated statements of Saul's rejection in chapter 13 (vs.14) and here serve to affirm the end of Saul's dynasty and therefore the rightness of the anointing and appointing of David to follow in the next chapter.

Vs. 27-29 – *“The LORD hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day”* – Whether in a sudden fit of anger or just earnest anguish, Saul took hold of Samuel's garment as he turned to leave, perhaps in an unthinking effort to prevent him, and his garment was torn. Under the Spirit's inspiration Samuel immediately took it up as an object lesson of the kingdom torn from Saul. Saul seemed more concerned about losing Samuel's support than about losing either the Lord or the kingdom. The *“neighbour of thine”* to whom Saul's kingdom was given was of course David (13:14).

“The Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent” – By *“the Strength of Israel”* Samuel referred to the Lord,

15:30 Then he said, I have sinned: yet honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD thy God.
15:31 So Samuel turned again after Saul; and Saul worshipped the LORD.

who would not lie as Saul had been doing. And He would not change His mind concerning Saul's continuance. Where Saul's eyes were upon Samuel, concerned with his attitude, Samuel's eyes were upon the Lord, the true glory or strength of Israel. The point is that Samuel's attitude or support did not matter with regard to Saul's continuance. "Look to the Lord as the source of strength and glory for yourself and your people Saul. It is the Lord who lifts a man or takes him down. It is the Lord you should be grasping and holding close, and before Him appealing for forgiveness."

Vs. 30 – "*I have sinned: yet...*" – See how this was still no beating of the breast with a "*God be merciful to me a sinner*" (Lk. 18:13). This was a willingness in Saul only to say what he thought Samuel wanted to hear. This was concern only for impressions, for Saul's honour, and "*before the elders of my people*". This was no concern for God's heart, because again, Saul could not say "my God", but "*thy God*"!

Vs. 31 – So Samuel consented this last time to lead in worship there at Gilgal. There was a matter of

15:32 Then said Samuel, Bring ye hither to me Agag the king of the Amalekites. And Agag came unto him delicately. And Agag said, Surely the bitterness of death is past.

15:33 And Samuel said, As the sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women. And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the LORD in Gilgal.

unfinished business to attend to in that king of the Amalekites as well.

Vs. 32-33 – *“Bring ye hither to me Agag the king of the Amalekites”* – It seems Agag came with a bit of a lift, thinking the threat of death had passed, that at least he would escape with his life. Oh but he was mistaken if he thought that in standing before godly Samuel there was safety. There was absolutely no give in Samuel when it came to what God had said. It is what made him great and greatly used by God in his generation. That man of God made short his words and then made short work of removing the life of that wicked king from the earth. This was no evil brutality in Samuel. It was a man committed to doing what his God said no matter how difficult the doing of it, no matter how heartless that might appear in his day or into the ages to come, though recorded in God’s Book for all generations to see. It was the difference between Saul and Samuel. Take the “m” and “e” out of Samuel’s name and you are left with Saul. It was the difference. Saul lived for “me” while Samuel lived for God, unconcerned what men thought of him.

*15:34 Then Samuel went to Ramah; and Saul went up to his house to Gibeah of Saul.
15:35 And Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death: nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul: and the LORD repented that he had made Saul king over Israel.*

Vs. 34-35 – Though Samuel no longer visited Saul, yet he could not help but care for the man and mourn his loss. In his prayers and concern, even for one who would “*despitefully use*” him, Samuel showed himself a child of the “*Father which is in heaven*” (Matt. 5:44-45).

Class 11 – I Samuel 16:1-17:16

16:1 And the LORD said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons.

16:1-13 – David Anointed to be King

Vs. 1 – “*How long wilt thou mourn for Saul*” – Chapter 15 left Samuel mourning for Saul in his fall to disobedience. And now some time later he was still mourning. It showed a tender heart in Samuel, perhaps even still praying before the Lord for Saul’s restoration to favour. The Lord comes across a bit brusque here, as if to insist that Samuel should quit asking concerning Saul since he had been rejected. Maybe Samuel was letting his responsibilities slip in his ongoing grief. There is a time and place for mourning, but then there is a time to move on. It seems Samuel had perhaps ventured past the acceptable in his sorrow, drawing this pointed word from his God. “Let us step into alignment with My decision in this and get on with it, shall we? There is work to be done”. There can be a tendency toward idling and self-pity in prolonged sorrow, when wisdom would lead us to get on with life.

“I will send thee to Jesse” – In the closing verses of

16:2 And Samuel said, How can I go? if Saul hear it, he will kill me. And the LORD said, Take an heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to the LORD.

the book of Ruth we find that Jesse was the son of Obed, the firstborn son of Boaz and Ruth.

Vs. 2 – *“If Saul hear it, he will kill me”* – Consider the implications of Samuel’s concern;

- Saul was clearly running at cross purposes with God at this point, confirming a rather ugly, settled change in his character. All veneer of praise and pleasure in God was cast aside now with Saul. So that he had actually become a danger to Samuel in carrying out the will of God. Saul had not come to repentance. Therefore he would not happily agree with Samuel obeying God in anointing another to be king.
- Judging by the Lord’s answer in instructing how to safely go to Bethlehem, it could be that the *“it”* Saul might hear of was more the trip than the anointing. This perhaps indicates a measure of suspicion or surveillance? Samuel was not even sure how to go down to Bethlehem without arousing suspicion. With a bad-hearted king on the throne, and with Saul’s insecurity come to full bloom, a man of

God must think twice about what he does! It had come to that!

- It seems Samuel felt a bit treasonous to be doing this, needing to sneak around behind the king's back. Yet the abundance of statements affirming the Lord's rejection of Saul made this no under-handed or treasonous activity (13:14; 15:23, 26, 28). If Saul's heart were right and repentant he would have been willing even for this.

“Say, I am come to sacrifice to the LORD” – This did not involve deception, for they *were* to kill a heifer, either for a sacrifice or feast or both. It was not a case of saying something only as a front for doing something else. This would actually be a return to the sacrifice and feast at Ramah when Saul was anointed years before (9:12).

The many snippets of conversation between Samuel and the Lord in these early chapters are interesting;

- 3:10-14 – Announcing Eli's doom.
- 8:6-9 – Assuring and instructing Samuel in their request for a king.
- 8:21-22 – Instructing him to give them a king.
- 9:15-17 – Description of Saul before his

16:3 And call Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will shew thee what thou shalt do: and thou shalt anoint unto me him whom I name unto thee.

16:4 And Samuel did that which the LORD spake, and came to Bethlehem. And the elders of the town trembled at his coming, and said, Comest thou peaceably?

arrival.

- 15:10-11 – Complaining of Saul’s failure to obey.

These conversations with God were mostly within the context of troubling situations or crisis times, explaining how to proceed. Thank God then for those troubling situations that drive us to His lap!

Vs. 3 – *“I will show thee what thou shalt do”* – No names or details were given at that point as to the sons. God did not give Samuel everything at once. He gave him enough to go on for now with the promise that he would have the rest when it was needed. God did the same with Abraham in sending him to a land *“that I will show thee”*. He had enough to get him to that Promised Land, with the assurance of further word when he got there. It is a reminder of the Lord’s way of leading us. His Word is *“a lamp unto my feet”* enlightening my next steps, not a bank of beams lighting up the whole playing field.

16:5 And he said, Peaceably: I am come to sacrifice unto the LORD: sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice. And he sanctified Jesse and his sons, and called them to the sacrifice.

Vs. 4 – *“And Samuel did that which the LORD spake”* – It was the simple story of Samuel’s life. He was a man who just did as the Lord asked, and therefore he was a man the Lord could so greatly use. Though Samuel knew the danger involved, he did not fail to follow through on the Lord’s words. It is the courage of the godly.

“The elders of the town trembled at his coming” – They may have suspected that Samuel came as a judge, perhaps investigating some crime. Certainly his visit there was out of the ordinary. Could they have anticipated the actual motive?

Vs. 5 – *“I am come to sacrifice unto the LORD”* – Samuel would sacrifice to the Lord a heifer, followed by a feast. The similarities with the Zulu concept of killing and eating a cow are interesting, except that in this case it was a sacrifice to the Lord rather than to the ancestors.

“Sanctify yourselves” – It seems this sanctifying in preparation for the sacrifice/feast involved ceremonial aspects done for them by Samuel, as

16:6 And it came to pass, when they were come, that he looked on Eliab, and said, Surely the LORD's anointed is before him.

16:7 But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.

well as things they must do for themselves, such as the washing of body and clothes (Ex. 19:10-15). The principle expressed is the need for spiritual preparedness before worship. If we truly value God's things;

- We will be sure to come to worship with all put right with our God.
- We will not partake of communion with a wrong or unsaved heart, or allow our children to do so.
- We will come to church services rested and ready to receive from the Lord.
- *"We will not forsake the house of our God"* in failing to attend services or to contribute to its maintenance.

Vs. 6-7 – *"Surely the LORD's anointed is before Him"*
– Eliab was the oldest of Jesse's 8 sons (17:12-13) and was apparently a tall man as was Saul (vs. 7). Samuel presumed it would be the same as before, and of course the firstborn would be the most likely

choice. But as soon as he began to suspect this was the Lord's choice based on appearances, the Lord was right there to explain that it would not be as with Saul when none looked more the part of a king than he. This time it would be according to the *Lord's* criteria, not according to human preference or tradition (He in fact chose the lastborn). With Saul, God gave what the people wanted and it failed miserably! With David, God chose the one *He* wanted, "*a man after His own heart*" (13:14), and success was permanent. Man makes his decisions according to limited awareness, but God "*searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts*" (I Chron. 28:9). He looks upon the heart as easily as we look upon the face. The moral of the story is, be ever so careful about judging according to your impressions, but rather seek the Lord's impression. "*Trust in the LORD with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understanding*" (Prov. 3:5).

Do the Lord's words in vs. 7 offer support to the modern "grace" movement that shuns every concept of law, every limitation upon outward appearance or practice? Are we not wise to give some thought to appearances? "*Providing for honest [good, honourable, praiseworthy] things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men*" (II Cor.

16:8 Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, Neither hath the LORD chosen this.

16:9 Then Jesse made Shammah to pass by. And he said, Neither hath the LORD chosen this.

16:10 Again, Jesse made seven of his sons to pass before Samuel. And Samuel said unto Jesse, The LORD hath not chosen these.

16:11 And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him: for we will not sit down till he come hither.

8:21; Rom. 12:17).

Vs. 8-10 – With this parade of sons sent past Samuel, from oldest to youngest, obviously Jesse had been made aware of what was behind it. Likely it was something understood only between Samuel and Jesse, done quietly before the feast, with even the sons in the dark as to the real meaning. There could not have been a public awareness of what was happening due to the danger of word getting back to Saul.

Vs. 11 – “*Are here all thy children?*” – Jesse had not even called David from the field, he was so sure the youngest would not be the one. In fact he would have let David miss the feast because of his insignificance. So even Jesse was not aware of the kingly characteristics in David, perhaps because he too was looking for different qualities than what God sought. In fact without the Spirit yet upon him (vs. 13), David may not have been any more phenomenal than the next guy at that point, just a

16:12 And he sent, and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the LORD said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he.

sincere young man before God, as Samuel had been many decades before. The lion and bear incidents probably happened after David's anointing and Spirit-filling or Jesse would surely have known of David's bravery and suspected him the one. With the Spirit's filling one is filled with courage and boldness and abilities beyond the normal (II Tim. 1:7). Where there is fear to boldly stand or do or speak for God there is not God's Spirit, certainly not in fullness.

“Behold, he keepeth the sheep” – God's call came to David while he was at work serving his father. Even so it was with Moses and Elisha and Saul and others. God chooses His servants from among those with a will to work. Consider how many were called into God's ministry from the work of shepherding; Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Saul, Amos. Even the first announcement of the birth of the Great Shepherd was made to shepherds watching over their sheep (Lk. 2).

Vs. 12 – *“Now he was ruddy”* – The term means reddish, either referring to a rosy complexion or red hair. David, like Saul, may have been an easy

16:13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah.

young fellow to look at, but he was God's choice because of his sincerely pursuing heart. David was likely a teenager at this point.

Vs. 13 – *“Anointed him in the midst of his brethren”* – Still this must have been a private family affair, lest it become known to Saul. Having shown himself faithful in the little responsibilities of his father's service, David was now lifted to greater responsibilities in the service of his heavenly Father (Matt. 25:31). It has been wisely said that he who is too big for the little jobs is probably too little for the big jobs.

“The Spirit of the LORD came upon David” – Again we find oil anointing associated with the Spirit's abiding presence and enabling, as with Saul's anointing in chapter 10. Compare the same with the King of Kings (Isa. 61:1; Jn. 3:34). Understand that with all believers now permanently indwelt with the Spirit in this current church age it is as if the Lord treats all the saints as *“kings and priests unto God and His Father”* (Rev. 1:6; 20:6; I Pet. 2:9).

16:14 But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him.

16:14-23 – David as Saul’s Musician

We find now the means by which the Lord began to exalt David, bringing him into Saul’s fellowship and palace.

Vs. 14 – “*An evil spirit from the LORD troubled him*” – The Spirit’s departure was the Lord’s departure (18:12; 28:15-16). Whereas the Spirit now permanently indwells believers, it was not so in the O.T. era. He came and went according to the need of the hour or a man’s response in those days. In so denying the Lord the glory due unto His name Saul lost the Spirit’s presence and power, even drawing to himself the greater obstacle to reform of some evil influence as the enticer and inciter to greater evil. It seems such dark spirits are a part of that facility whereby God helps in the hardening of those who choose to be hard-hearted, or even in helping to drive them to repentance (I Cor. 5:5). Compare the Lord later allowing “*a lying spirit*” to lead Ahab to his grave (I Ki. 22). Understand therefore David’s plea in Psalm 51:11, when he had fallen into gross sin and at last came to repentance. He begged the Lord there to “*cast me not away from*

*16:15 And Saul's servants said unto him, Behold now, an evil spirit from God troubleth thee.
16:16 Let our lord now command thy servants, which are before thee, to seek out a man, who is a cunning player on an harp: and it shall come to pass, when the evil spirit from God is upon thee, that he shall play with his hand, and thou shalt be well.
16:17 And Saul said unto his servants, Provide me now a man that can play well, and bring him to me.*

thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me". David feared that God might handle him as He had Saul.

Vs. 15-16 – Saul’s servants were somehow aware of the magnitude of what Saul was facing even if he was not, perhaps showing itself in ratty impatience and bouts of rage. Though they knew it was “*from God*” yet none dared go to the heart of the concern and confront Saul with the need to get his heart right with God (as brave Nathan with David in II Sam. 12). Instead they suggested only a superficial fix, a balm of beautiful music, believing this might bring relief to the king (and to them!). It was of the Lord in His purpose to see David appointed as Saul’s private musician.

Vs. 17-18 – “*Provide me now a man that can play well*” – Such a great deal of trouble in order to prescribe a kind of musical medication for a man who refused to just deal with God directly. Perhaps now with that evil spirit released upon Saul it was a step further into actual *inability* to do what he

16:18 Then answered one of the servants, and said, Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, that is cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the LORD is with him.

16:19 Wherefore Saul sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, Send me David thy son, which is with the sheep.

16:20 And Jesse took an ass laden with bread, and a bottle of wine, and a kid, and sent them by David his son unto Saul.

should have done in the first place, again an aspect of God's hardening of the hard.

With word of Saul's willingness came word of David's ability from one of the servants. Such an impressive reputation David already held even as a teenager, as one not only capable with a harp (small 10-stringed lyre), but brave and strong and wise and handsome as well. And the key feature, what Saul had lost, and again recognized by these perceptive servants, "*And the LORD is with him*". Do you see how David was not only arising through the Spirit's power to remarkable capabilities, but he was becoming known as well? And this promotion to the palace would greatly contribute to that rise. Again, it is the Lord who organizes circumstances to either increase or decrease one's influence.

Vs. 19-20 – "*Send me David thy son*" – Oh can you imagine Jesse's dread with the delivery of that registered letter? It was what he had feared from the day Samuel anointed his son. And here it was!

16:21 And David came to Saul, and stood before him: and he loved him greatly; and he became his armourbearer.

This could only be the removal of the threat David now represented to Saul's dynasty! Yet how could the king be questioned or resisted? Jesse could only send David with a humble gift, and with the prayer that the boy might somehow be spared. Perhaps he was wise to find courage in his faith, that if indeed it was God's purpose that David be king no man could thwart Him.

Vs. 21 – *“And he loved him greatly”* – If they had feared the very worst, it turned out to be the very best! How often our worst fears turn out this way, showing up our worry as all for nothing. Again, it was because the Lord was with him. Having walked in God's favour, he was on the rise in the eyes of men as well, just as Samuel so many years before (3:19-4:1).

“And he became his armourbearer” – The armourbearer carried a warrior's spare weapons and even the large shield behind which he would hide in battle (17:7). It was a position requiring greatest ability, bravery, and trust. David may have only been promoted to this after he later proved himself against Goliath.

16:22 And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, Let David, I pray thee, stand before me; for he hath found favour in my sight.

16:23 And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.

Vs. 22 – “*Let David, I pray thee, stand before me*” – Surely it was with a great sigh of relief that Jesse received this one! Perhaps thinking to hear of his son’s funeral he heard only of his great favour before the king.

Vs. 23 – Though good music is a good and valuable thing, we must not conclude that beautiful music actually holds such power. This was the Lord working again, involved in providing an answer through David’s gift in lifting him to prominence.

17:1-16 – Goliath’s Challenge

Eli and Saul were alike in that while still holding their God-appointed office their hearts had become hardened toward the Lord. Samuel and David were alike in that they were tender toward the Lord from their childhood. In both cases the tender took the place of the hardened. Where David sang of the Lord, “*Thy lovingkindness is better than life*” (Ps. 63:3), for Saul, life was better than God’s lovingkindness. He was ever a man more concerned

- 17:1 Now the Philistines gathered together their armies to battle, and were gathered together at Shochoh, which belongeth to Judah, and pitched between Shochoh and Azekah, in Ephesdammim.*
- 17:2 And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered together, and pitched by the valley of Elah, and set the battle in array against the Philistines.*
- 17:3 And the Philistines stood on a mountain on the one side, and Israel stood on a mountain on the other side; and there was a valley between them.*
-

with reputation before men than with the Lord's pleasure, therefore his life was a vain cover-up.

This chapter is comparable to chapter 11. Where Saul rose to popularity and leadership there against Ammon, David is now put on display here through Goliath's challenge.

Vs. 1 – *“Now the Philistines gathered”* – God has no trouble stirring up trouble for the one forsaking Him. If we acknowledge Him in all our ways then He straightens out the way before us (Prov. 3:6). But when we forsake Him He can push up painful obstacles into the way in an effort to drive the wayward back to Him.

Vs. 2-3 – *“Saul...pitched by the valley of Elah”* – Apparently Elah was a wide valley with a deep and steep-banked ravine running down the middle of it. Saul's choice to set their line of defence *“on a mountain on the one side”* of this valley was perhaps a clever bit of strategy. With the need to cross such

17:4 And there went out a champion out of the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath, of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span.
17:5 And he had an helmet of brass upon his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail; and the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of brass.
17:6 And he had greaves of brass upon his legs, and a target of brass between his shoulders.
17:7 And the staff of his spear was like a weaver's beam; and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron: and one bearing a shield went before him.

a deep gully this would give the disadvantage to the attacking side and the advantage to the defenders. If Israel could patiently wait, forcing the Philistines to cross that ravine, it would effectively remove their chariots and cavalry from the battle. Goliath was likely a surprise, and an embarrassing twist in an otherwise good plan.

Vs. 4 – “*And there went out a champion*” – Goliath was probably one of the Anakims, those giants so feared at the first by the Israelites, yet so easily handled by Joshua in the conquest. They were destroyed from the land, leaving them only in the land of the Philistines (Josh. 11:21-22).

Vs. 5-7 – Goliath’s impressive stats;

- Height – “*six cubits and a span*” = 3.25 metres = 10 feet (vs. 4).
- Armour (vs. 5-6);
 - o Brass helmet.

17:8 And he stood and cried unto the armies of Israel, and said unto them, Why are ye come out to set your battle in array? am not I a Philistine, and ye servants to Saul? choose you a man for you, and let him come down to me.

17:9 If he be able to fight with me, and to kill me, then will we be your servants: but if I prevail against him, and kill him, then shall ye be our servants, and serve us.

17:10 And the Philistine said, I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together.

- Brass coat of mail of 5000 shekels = 60-75 kgs.
 - Brass greaves covering lower legs.
 - Brass “*target*” or back plate.
 - He was well protected. Though big, he was not taking any chances.
- Weapons (vs. 7);
- Spear with 7 kg iron head.
 - Armourbearer carrying a shield.
 - A sword, with which David later removed his head.

Goliath’s imposing presence is suggestive of all of the seemingly impossible obstacles or complications or threats we all face in life. If we face them without the Lord, as Saul, they become fearful, humiliating events. If we face them with the Lord, as David, they become launching pads of opportunity. With the Spirit, David was unaffected by a context of

cowering fear, and he boldly stepped out into leadership, and on his way up to the throne.

Vs. 8-10 – Goliath’s challenge – “Why bother involving the whole army? Let us settle this thing with a contest of champions, yours against me. Whoever wins in a fight to the death wins for his nation. And the losing side becomes servants to the winner.” This promise proved to be a lie, for with Goliath’s fall the Philistines quickly hoofed it for home. So it was a farce from the beginning, perhaps all an effort to lure Israel across to the other side of the valley where the Philistines could storm down upon them with their chariots and horsemen. As Satan is the father of lies so his followers. And no king in his right mind would agree to any such arrangement, to risk turning his nation to servants due to a gamble gone bad.

“I defy the armies of Israel this day” – Strong words, but really needing no response, as Hezekiah’s counsel with Rabshekah’s railing abuse (II Ki. 18:36). Israel’s position was one of defence and thus they could afford to wait. They needed only to respond to a Philistine attack. The really stunning part is Saul allowing *anybody* to go, let alone a boy.

It was a moment when Saul might have been talking

17:11 When Saul and all Israel heard those words of the Philistine, they were dismayed, and greatly afraid.
17:12 Now David was the son of that Ephrathite of Bethlehemjudah, whose name was Jesse; and he had eight sons: and the man went among men for an old man in the days of Saul.
17:13 And the three eldest sons of Jesse went and followed Saul to the battle: and the names of his three sons that went to the battle were Eliab the firstborn, and next unto him Abinadab, and the third Shammah.
17:14 And David was the youngest: and the three eldest followed Saul.
17:15 But David went and returned from Saul to feed his father's sheep at Bethlehem.
17:16 And the Philistine drew near morning and evening, and presented himself forty days.

to God. But alas there was no sign of it, for he knew he was not right with God.

Vs. 11 – *“They were dismayed, and greatly afraid”* – God does not give *“a Spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind”* (II Tim. 1:7). Their fearful dismay should have been warning enough that the Lord was not with them, again (as in chapter 4).

Vs. 12-16 – The scene is now being set for David’s arrival at the battlefield and his response to Goliath. Again, it was God at work in aligning the details to bring David to prominence. As a finger puzzle He moves and shapes events to the best advantage of the one He wishes to advance. Only Jesse’s three eldest sons were with Saul’s army at Elah.

“But David went and returned from Saul” – There came some point when David’s services were no

longer needed by Saul and he returned to his father's flocks. David may in fact have been long absent from Saul's palace before the events of this chapter, therefore their failure to later recognize him (vs. 55-58).

“Thou comest to me
with a sword, and with a spear,
and with a shield:
but I come to thee in the name of
the LORD of hosts,
the God of the armies of Israel,
whom thou hast defied”

(1 Sam. 17:45)

Class 12 – I Samuel 17:17-58

Chapter 16 was a turning point in this book of I Samuel, with focus beginning to shift there from Saul to David. Young David brings a breath of fresh air to the record, for he was such an opposite to Saul. Saul basically ignored God, living largely according to earthly advantage. Yet David lived for God, without concern for earthly advantages. While Saul considered only his own name, David's concern was for "*the name of the LORD of hosts*". And how incredibly greater was the success of his life over Saul's! David's house was established forever, and over the ruins of Saul's. Both Eli and Saul lived to please themselves rather than God and their influence came to a tragic end.

As we left the scene last week it was the attacking Philistines lined up against Israel arrayed on either side of the Valley of Elah, with both sides hesitant to actually engage the other. Israel did not need to attack and the Philistines were understandably a bit gun-shy, not having come off very well against Israel in recent years. And it was Goliath, the champion of Gath, coming out morning and evening each day, defying Israel and their God, and demanding a contest between himself and someone on Israel's side to settle the issue. This had gone on for weeks!

17:17 And Jesse said unto David his son, Take now for thy brethren an ephah of this parched corn, and these ten loaves, and run to the camp of thy brethren;

17:18 And carry these ten cheeses unto the captain of their thousand, and look how thy brethren fare, and take their pledge.

Goliath came out fully gilded in brass; helmet, coat of mail, leg protection, back plate or “target”, and even an armourbearer carrying a large shield before him. Though a hefty specimen, Goliath was taking serious precautions. He was armed with a huge spear and a sword at his side. He came with the best the world could offer at that time, both in defensive and offensive armoury. From a human perspective he looked an impossible job. But as we know, God, through His man, found the joints of the armour, just as He later would with King Ahab (I Ki. 22). No man, no threat, no earthly concern is so hopeless that God’s projectile cannot find the unprotected mark and bring it down. It is lessons of hope in life’s battles that we find in this portion; lessons that have lifted the heart and courage of many down through the centuries.

17:17-58 – David’s Response

Vs. 17 – “*Run to the camp of thy brethren*” – It would have been dangerous sending David to the battlefield. Was there more wisdom than is evident on the surface in Jesse’s move here? Knowing of

17:19 Now Saul, and they, and all the men of Israel, were in the valley of Elah, fighting with the Philistines.

17:20 And David rose up early in the morning, and left the sheep with a keeper, and took, and went, as Jesse had commanded him; and he came to the trench, as the host was going forth to the fight, and shouted for the battle.

17:21 For Israel and the Philistines had put the battle in array, army against army.

David's anointing to be king, and perhaps of his supernatural victory over lion and bear, and of the stand-off at the battlefield, was there a hidden purpose in sending David rather than one of the older sons?

Perhaps local families were responsible to help feed the troops in the event of war (II Sam. 16:1-2; 17:27-29). An ephah is about 22 litres, or enough to feed three men for 3-4 days.

Vs. 18 – *“Take their pledge”* – David was to bring back word of assurance that his brothers were doing alright.

Vs. 20-21 – *“David rose up early in the morning”* – We can well imagine the excitement of a boy on his way to the battlefield, and so David was up and away early. Yet though still a young man, there is responsibility evident here in David. Jesse trusted him with a task involving a measure of danger. And David did not expect his father to see to the care of the sheep while he was away, but organized for this

17:22 And David left his carriage in the hand of the keeper of the carriage, and ran into the army, and came and saluted his brethren.

17:23 And as he talked with them, behold, there came up the champion, the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name, out of the armies of the Philistines, and spake according to the same words: and David heard them.

17:24 And all the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him, and were sore afraid.

himself. David's early departure put him there in time to see the men leave their camping area to take positions along their daily line of defence. So the armies set themselves in battle formation on either side of the valley each day, and Goliath would then come out to state his challenge again and renew the terror among Israel's trembling host.

Vs. 22 – *“And ran into the army”* – With youthful excitement David ran to the battlefield to find and greet his brothers. Perhaps he envied and looked up to them for their manly opportunity to bear arms and serve as soldiers in Saul's army. But if such an attitude was in David it was soon to be disappointed.

Vs. 23-24 – *“Behold, there came out the champion”* – Even as David was greeting his brothers and asking their welfare his attention was drawn to something happening down in the valley between. He saw as Goliath took his stand and shouted his challenge as he had so many mornings before. Had David not gotten himself moving early he would have missed

17:25 And the men of Israel said, Have ye seen this man that is come up? surely to defy Israel is he come up: and it shall be, that the man who killeth him, the king will enrich him with great riches, and will give him his daughter, and make his father's house free in Israel.
17:26 And David spake to the men that stood by him, saying, What shall be done to the man that killeth this Philistine, and taketh away the reproach from Israel? for who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?
17:27 And the people answered him after this manner, saying, So shall it be done to the man that killeth him.

this opportunity. He heard Goliath's arrogant defiance of God and His people and he saw and sensed the fearful recoiling of his people. He was there for the full effect.

Vs. 25-27 – *“Have ye seen this man that is come up?”* – David heard the banter among the men about Goliath and even of the rewards for killing him; riches, royal marriage, and family freedoms, perhaps from taxes or other civil duties required of all. He began asking around among the men confirming the truth of what he had heard. It seems David's main concern was the disgraceful reproach in the Philistine defiance of the people of the living God. Rather than fear as in all others, there was righteous anger in him for God's sake and for the sake of his people. He was offended for God and could not endure His dishonour left unchallenged. Goliath simply could not be allowed such power, to publicly slander God and right here in God's land, and to strike such fear into the hearts of His people, and all of it left unchallenged. It just

17:28 And Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spake unto the men; and Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, Why camest thou down hither? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle.

17:29 And David said, What have I now done? Is there not a cause?

17:30 And he turned from him toward another, and spake after the same manner: and the people answered him again after the former manner.

was not right in David's eyes!

Vs. 28-30 – As with Joseph and Jesus, David too was misunderstood and falsely accused by his brother. We can understand what was likely happening in Eliab's heart. He, as the oldest and most likely of Jesse's sons to be given leadership responsibility, had been by-passed in Samuel's anointing of David. Feelings of jealousy and unfairness perhaps come to the surface here in his jumping to conclusions concerning young David's motives. Perhaps his own fear to face the challenger was exposed in the light of David's courage. His "little brother" had a growing reputation for bravery and ability, both out in the field and in the king's court, which was perhaps eating at Eliab (16:18, 21). And so he demanded the "*why*" of David's coming, not taking the time to find out that it was actually for Eliab's own benefit (belly) and through their father's command that his brother was there. Do you hear how he made small David's responsibilities, speaking of "*those few sheep in the*

17:31 And when the words were heard which David spake, they rehearsed them before Saul: and he sent for him.

wilderness”? A tiny task off in the back side of beyond, suggesting David good for only a little backwater affair, attempting to diminish David’s worth. Do you sense Eliab’s bitter attitude? Words of an offended man, obviously sourced much deeper than David’s innocent actions there that morning. Though Eliab proclaims his awareness of David’s pride, yet it is humility that we see in David (18:18, 23; 24:14) and pride showing here now in Eliab. How often folks accuse others of that for which they themselves are guilty. Eliab spoke to a young man showing sound responsibility as if he were irresponsible enough to leave his father’s work just to see a little excitement. David merely asked what he had done wrong, affirming that he did indeed have good reason to be there. And without offering any further details he simply turned from his bitter brother to continue affirming the truth of the situation there among them. It is likely that David found it hard to believe that others were not feeling the same offence for God’s name that he was feeling.

Vs. 31 – Obviously at some point David turned from inquiry to expressing his willingness to meet the challenge. Either he was talking quite energetically

17:32 And David said to Saul, Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine.

17:33 And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth.

or there was a keen ear among them for word of any such willingness. That the readiness of a teenager would even be heard and considered viable can only convey the desperation among them.

Vs. 32 – “*Let no man's heart fail because of him*” – From David's first words to Saul he spoke courage to the quivering leader of a gelatine host, expressing the basic can-do mentality in this young man, that with God *nothing* is impossible! Not only was David not afraid of Goliath, he insisted that *nobody* should be. Victory over that great obstacle began with complete and fearless confidence in God.

Vs. 33 – “*Thou art not able to go*” – From Saul's first words he spoke to David only of inability in himself, expressing Saul's fundamental *cannot-do* mentality. To be sure, David was unable without the Lord. But again, God was the missing factor from all of Saul's estimations, and present in all of David's. Saul tended to gauge things only according to human abilities.

“*Thou art but a youth*” – The odds did look a bit

17:34 And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock:

skewed to Philistine favour. But again, David was a youth *with God*. God fighting with David is the vital lesson here. Look at the transparent contrasts in this set-up;

- Goliath was abnormally huge, while David was a normal man and physically immature as well.
- Goliath was armed to the teeth, while David only with staff, sling, and stones.
- Goliath was experienced, while David had no experience with war.

But God was more than enough to make up the differences. God is *always* more than enough to make up any differences. That is the wonderful point here. *With* the Lord is victory. *Without* the Lord is defeat.

Vs. 34-37 – “*There came a lion, and a bear*” – As proof of his qualification to face Goliath David related his victories over a lion and bear in protecting his father’s sheep. It seems these were two separate incidences yet put together because of

17:35 And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him.

17:36 Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God.

their similarities. In both cases David first delivered the captured lamb out of the mouth of the beast, and then killed the angry beast when it went for him. It is unclear whether he even used a weapon. Samson, empowered with the Spirit, killed a lion with his bare hands, apparently without even messing up his clothes for courting (Judges 14:5-6). Now we discover that victory over the lion and bear was not only for David's benefit in preparing him for this event, but for Saul's benefit as well, as proof of God's presence and power with David.

“Seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God” – Again David's shepherd heart becomes evident in protecting the interests of others. Not only would he protect Jesse's interests in not losing any of his sheep, not only would he protect the sheep out of care for them, but he was jealous as well for God's honour, determined to protect His name from insult. One with a true shepherd's heart will not be soft on those who defame the true and living God, or on those creatures who prey upon the Father's sheep. A true shepherd heart attacks both corruption and corrupters out of love for the Father

17:37 David said moreover, The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the LORD be with thee.

17:38 And Saul armed David with his armour, and he put an helmet of brass upon his head; also he armed him with a coat of mail.

and His flock.

“The LORD that delivered me...will deliver me” – Such confidence in the Lord David expressed, yet confidence arising from experience in trusting the Lord in lesser challenges. We begin by loving God and His people right where we are. We learn to trust God in fighting for His/their best interests in the smaller arena. God then leads us step by step up to the greater challenges and responsibilities. Do not despise the lesser challenges of life, for they are merely God’s training ground for the greater opportunities.

“Go, and the LORD be with thee” – David’s confident enthusiasm for the Lord and for His name was a winning thing, convincing Saul that he was a fit contender. So young David was already beginning to walk in the king’s shoes, bravely accepting kingly responsibilities.

Vs. 38-39 – *“Saul armed David with his armour”* – Thinking according to the normal way of man, the

17:39 And David girded his sword upon his armour, and he assayed to go; for he had not proved it. And David said unto Saul, I cannot go with these; for I have not proved them. And David put them off him.

17:40 And he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag which he had, even in a scrip; and his sling was in his hand: and he drew near to the Philistine.

obvious was to at least get David protected in some measure. But as we have seen earlier, Saul was no small man. Armour fitted to him must have been cumbersome on David's young frame to say the least. It was an initial effort on David's part to go along with the norms and take on a bit of earthly protection. But then in the dress-up process he saw the joke of it and things clarified in his own mind. If he was going to do this it was not going to be according to the expectations of men. He was not going with a focus on earthly trusts, but with his every hope founded on *God's* faithfulness and ability. And so he took the initiative and stripped it all off! He was not making suggestions or asking advice or permission at this point. He knew what he must do and was now running according to his own heart's advice. As we walk with God we will know the way to go, or at least the way *not* to go will become obvious, as here.

Vs. 40 – “*Chose him five smooth stones*” – Though David was proceeding according to his own method, he was not going half-cocked or without due

17:41 And the Philistine came on and drew near unto David; and the man that bare the shield went before him.
17:42 And when the Philistine looked about, and saw David, he disdained him: for he was but a youth, and ruddy, and of a fair countenance.
17:43 And the Philistine said unto David, Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves? And the Philistine cursed David by his gods.
17:44 And the Philistine said to David, Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field.

consideration. He chose 5 stones because he might miss. Why else? This was not a lack of faith only a wise and practical precaution. There is a place for practical measures. He chose *smooth* stones because these fly straighter. Flat surfaces catch wind resistance unevenly, introducing unpredictable influences in flight. It was not a time for unpredictable elements. He chose *stones* rather than larger rocks because he did not expect his method to be any different than his normal approach. David was trusting God to take his usual way of doing things and bless it with supernatural power for victory.

Vs. 41-44 – “*He disdained him: for he was but a youth*” – Finally Goliath was getting some action. But of course when he saw a youth come skipping down the hill and collecting a couple items out of the river he was most insulted. “What is this?! After all these weeks you send me a pretty boy with a stick?! Am I a dog, to be driven away with sticks and stones? Come to me little one, and I will mince

17:45 Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.

17:46 This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcases of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.

17:47 And all this assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the LORD's, and he will give you into our hands.

your pretty body into food for the birds and beasts of the field!” But young David, absolutely fearless, with complete confidence in God, was the equal of the belligerent Philistine in outlining exactly what he expected to do *“in the name of the LORD of hosts”*.

Vs. 45-47 – *“This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand”* – “You come with weapons and protections, *earthly* trusts. But I come with a *heavenly* trust. I come to avenge that holy name you have defied and defiled. Victory this day will be from the LORD God of heaven. And not only over you, but over the whole Philistine army. And not only that these here might know of the God who delivers His people, but that the whole world might know of the true God in Israel. He alone is the Lord of hosts, who needs no earthly armour to win. The battle is His, and your number is up!” This was no pretty boy speech, but tough and ready!

Vs. 48 – *“The Philistine arose, and came and drew*

17:48 And it came to pass, when the Philistine arose, and came, and drew nigh to meet David, that David hastened, and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine.

17:49 And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slang it, and smote the Philistine in his forehead, that the stone sunk into his forehead; and he fell upon his face to the earth.

nigh” – David’s strong words put a bit of meaning into Goliath’s purpose to kill him. Now he was going to enjoy making mincemeat of this cheeky stripling. Young though he might be, David had certainly said enough to lift Goliath to the fight.

“David hasted, and ran...to meet the Philistine” – There was energy and enthusiasm in David, and without the least hesitation, expressing again his fearlessness. His confidence in God was beyond just a verbal thing, actually communicating to his attitude and actions.

Vs. 49 – *“And took thence a stone, and slang it”* – Again, David simply proceeded according to his usual practice in the field when handling other predators. He did not do anything fancy or different, just according to his normal, practiced approach. And God was with him to make it quite enough.

“And smote the Philistine in the forehead” – David of course brought a measure of skill to this encounter.

17:50 So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him; but there was no sword in the hand of David.

Yet it was the Lord who directed that stone with such precision and power, just as He directed the unaimed arrow that later took King Ahab, who tried to be clever in taking no chances as well, but God again found the mark (I Ki. 22). Did God add force to that stone to put it through such a thick skull, or can a stone actually be flung that hard with a sling? David was not messing around here. He was bowling for the stumps with all he had. And his stone found the only vital point where it could do the kind of damage necessary. Where else but the head? And where on that helmeted head but the forehead or between the eyes? When it is God against a man, He is quite capable of invading any fortress. Though men become so confident in their strength or armour the Lord takes them down, and they discover how tiny and feeble and vulnerable they were all along.

Vs. 50 – “*So David prevailed over the Philistine*” – Obviously Goliath’s shield carrier suddenly felt very exposed with incredible hulk behind him dropped like a stone. He surely hasted to the hill, for no further mention of him is made. God strips away the tinsel towers of men and they are left suddenly

17:51 Therefore David ran, and stood upon the Philistine, and took his sword, and drew it out of the sheath thereof, and slew him, and cut off his head therewith. And when the Philistines saw their champion was dead, they fled.

exposed and gripped with fear, while David came stripped of all protection but the Lord, and prevailed!

“But there was no sword in the hand of David” – David of course needed a sword to finish the job and to confirm before all looking on from both sides that Goliath was not getting back up. But though he had no such weapon God was there to provide for the next step. There was Goliath’s sword still in its sheath, carried by him to his own beheading. Again the principle comes clear that God provides for each new step as we do His will for the moment, fearful though it may be. And see how ably God turns against proud man what he thinks is for his own strength and protection making it the means for his own end. Compare again God so easily turning vast attacking armies against themselves.

Vs. 51 – *“Therefore David ran”* – Again we find David running, the 3rd time in this chapter (vs. 22, 48). This was no foot-dragger. With God’s confidence in his heart David ran to the task. When we know what we are doing is right and good, why do it half-

heartedly?

“And when the Philistines saw their champion was dead, they fled” – There could be no arguing the point when all saw Goliath’s head held high in David’s hand. And so suddenly the whole intimidating Philistine threat vanished from the hillside before them. With the nose of the problem flattened, the entire daunting dilemma lost all of its power.

Our own dilemmas can often find solutions in the same way. The problems life throws at us can often come with many facets or with several concerns all at once, serving at times to lift the wave of circumstance to crushing force, causing us to lose heart. But oftentimes if the main concern(s) is dealt with, and dealt with adequately, as we hold God’s hand through it, the whole weight of our dilemma tips and turns and dissolves away. When a bird of prey attacks, it spreads its wings making it appear a much bigger threat than it really is, yet one hit in just the right place and the seemingly overwhelming threat folds and falls in a harmless heap. If we can keep our head straight and our heart strong in faith in times of trouble and find and effectively flatten the main trouble spot, we will often find all the encouragement we need to sort out the remaining

17:52 And the men of Israel and of Judah arose, and shouted, and pursued the Philistines, until thou come to the valley, and to the gates of Ekron. And the wounded of the Philistines fell down by the way to Shaaraim, even unto Gath, and unto Ekron.

17:53 And the children of Israel returned from chasing after the Philistines, and they spoiled their tents.

17:54 And David took the head of the Philistine, and brought it to Jerusalem; but he put his armour in his tent.

bits and pieces. With God's help, one well-placed stone caused the whole intimidating national threat to fold and fall away, just as Jonathan's brave and faithful hit on one Philistine garrison scattered the entire threat like the morning mist (I Sam. 14).

Vs. 52-53 – Though the Philistine host had a head start in the foot race to Philistia, still many were caught and killed along the way.

Vs. 54 – “*And brought it to Jerusalem*” – David then carried Goliath's head to Jerusalem, apparently later, sometime after the events of the day (vs. 57). Jerusalem was still occupied by the Jebusites at that time. Yet it seems David already had his sights set on that city as his future capital. Perhaps he deposited the giant's head there as a warning token of his plans for them as well in time. The taking of Jerusalem was David's first task when he later came to the throne over the whole nation (II Sam. 5:6-9).

“He put his armour in his tent” – “Tent” here is in the

17:55 And when Saul saw David go forth against the Philistine, he said unto Abner, the captain of the host, Abner, whose son is this youth? And Abner said, As thy soul liveth, O king, I cannot tell.
17:56 And the king said, Enquire thou whose son the stripling is.

sense of dwelling place. David brought Goliath's armour home, though for some reason the sword was later given to the priests at Nob (21:8-9).

Vs. 55-58 – “*Whose son is this youth?*” – The ignorance of Saul and Abner concerning David is a difficult issue since of course David had previously served in the palace as Saul's personal musician. It may be that Saul's question related more to the who of David's father, or it may have been quite some time since “*David went and returned from Saul*” (vs. 15), allowing time for physical changes as David grew to maturity. Whatever the reason for their failure to recognize him, this feature serves to highlight the crucial issue involved here. It was not a matter of who David was or who his father was or what might be his background or ancestry. Royalty of course had only just begun with Saul, so there could be no royal lineage or heritage. There was no family tradition of courage behind David to lift him to such a stunning performance; only that noble heritage of other mighty men and women of valour who stepped out by faith in the living God as had David; the Joshuas and Calebs and Deborahs and

17:57 And as David returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, Abner took him, and brought him before Saul with the head of the Philistine in his hand.

17:58 And Saul said to him, Whose son art thou, thou young man? And David answered, I am the son of thy servant Jesse the Bethlehemite.

Gideons (and Jonathans) of history; only that record of brave leaders who were strong in faith to believe God for victory over seemingly impossible foes. No known name was necessary. No noble ancestry was needed. No adequate weaponry or armour was required. Nothing of the things man might deem essential in the making of a champion. For “*God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty*” (I Cor. 1:27). It was simply a young man who loved God and could not stand to have God’s name dishonoured. David, the unknown champion, went forth to victory not in his own name, but “*in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel*”, as he proclaimed (vs. 45). Yet still Saul in his spiritual dullness was missing the point, looking for reasons for such courage and ability down here on an earthly level, rather than in the God who is willing to glorify Himself in a man of true faith, whoever he might be.

We all have giants to face in life of one kind or another. It is ever a question of how we face them; either in our own name or strength, or “*in the name of the LORD of hosts*”.

“And Saul was afraid of David,
because the LORD
was with him,
and was departed from Saul”

(1 Sam. 18:12)

Class 13 – I Samuel 18-19

18:1 And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.

The theme of chapter 18 in rhyme might be stated;

David on the rise,
Except in Saul's eyes

18:1-4 – Friendship with Jonathan

Vs. 1 – “*The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David*” – “*Knit*” obviously speaks of the closest bond. Jonathan’s great love for David “*as his own soul*” is truly an endearing aspect of this account. He recognized a kindred spirit in David, for they were similar in their courageous faith in God. Though David had served previously as Saul’s musician yet no such relationship had developed between the two then. Perhaps Jonathan could not identify with music like he could with courage against the Philistines. David’s stunning victory over Goliath struck a chord in Jonathan. Though David was a threat to Jonathan’s right to the throne, yet his humble love scattered every shred of jealousy in him. Perhaps David’s bold example even lifted Jonathan out of a spiritual low, for it would

18:2 And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house.

18:3 Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul.

18:4 And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle.

have been like him in earlier days to do as David did in facing the most intimidating odds (chapter 14). Such a love in Jonathan speaks of David's attractive nature as well. Though a very capable young man there was no annoying arrogance in David, only simple, endearing, country-boy humility. The fullness of God's presence in a life makes one easier to love (2:26; Lk. 2:52).

Vs. 2 – *“Saul took him that day”* – Saul now gave David a permanent position among his leaders. I wonder if perhaps brother Eliab got the job of watching *“those few sheep in the wilderness”* (17:28).

Vs. 3 – *“Jonathan and David made a covenant”* – This was a permanent commitment to the other's very best, like a marriage vow. It is what later moved David to honour Jonathan's son, Mephibosheth (II Sam. 9).

Vs. 4 – *“Stripped”* does not suggest nakedness, but only the removal of the outer clothes (also 19:24). That Jonathan dressed David with his own things

18:5 And David went out whithersoever Saul sent him, and behaved himself wisely: and Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants.

18:6 And it came to pass as they came, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of musick.

seems to symbolize the giving over of his own right to the throne.

18:5-30 – Hardships with Saul

Vs. 5 – “*David...behaved himself wisely*” – Young David showed wisdom beyond his years with the Spirit’s help, for God is the One who prospers us. The phrase “*behaved himself wisely*” comes of a Hebrew word that could also be translated “succeeded” or “prospered”. The expression of David’s wisdom appears 4 times in this chapter (vs. 14-15, 30), a very significant underscore.

“*He was accepted in the sight of all the people*” – David’s prominence and prosperity continued to lift him before the people, both within and outside the palace. See how the very thing Saul longed for and even forsook God for, to be honoured by his people, David found in the way of faithfulness to his God. Folks run from God in pursuit of the very things they might have in His service.

18:7 And the women answered one another as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.

18:8 And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him; and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands: and what can he have more but the kingdom?

Vs. 6-7 – The word “*Philistine*” here could actually refer to the Philistines generally rather than to Goliath in particular. This may refer to a return from some later successful campaign rather than from Goliath’s defeat. The women came out in a kind of celebration parade. Putting their words into the form of a song, they praised the heroes of their nation. Perhaps it was well meaning, but their lyrics were the height of indiscretion and totally unnecessary. Their focus should rather have been upon the Lord as their deliverer, not a comparison of men.

Vs. 8 – “*Saul was very wroth*” – For Saul it meant the loss of that one thing that had always been important to him, now shifting to David. Again, he had turned from God in order to maintain the people’s acceptance, yet now this one honouring the Lord held the honour of people as well.

“*What can he have more but the kingdom?*” – Saul unknowingly spoke prophetically here. Yet he certainly had the ability to know the outcome, had

18:9 And Saul eyed David from that day and forward.

18:10 And it came to pass on the morrow, that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied in the midst of the house: and David played with his hand, as at other times: and there was a javelin in Saul's hand.

he been listening to God's words through Samuel. He could see David's popularity angled upward toward the throne. Yet his anger at David was actually rebellion against God for His evident work in David. Where Jonathan rejoiced in David's success, Saul only hated him for it.

Consider Saul's response as a reflection of Satan's hatred of Jesus, the Son of David. He too has every ability to know what will come, for God has spoken. But his proud, jealous rage has deafened and blinded him.

Vs. 9 – “*And Saul eyed David*” – Saul was looking with disfavour now, where before he had looked with such favour upon David. That those women succeeded in putting David in Saul's bad books was not entirely their fault. It was indiscretion coupled with a bad heart in Saul, so full of pride. Humble Jonathan would not have minded hearing of David's honours, even to his own exclusion.

Vs. 10 – It seems Saul had a part in bringing on this evil spirit through his jealousy. We will see the

18:11 And Saul cast the javelin; for he said, I will smite David even to the wall with it. And David avoided out of his presence twice.

18:12 And Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with him, and was departed from Saul.

same again in 19:8-9. And see how David now could no longer help Saul with his gift. This was not because David had changed or because his music had changed, but only because Saul had changed for the worse. When one allows his heart to become poisoned toward another with whom he once found good advice, he is no longer able to hear good counsel from that one any more. And not because the advice or the advice-giver has changed.

Whatever was the nature of this prophesying, it obviously did not need *God's* Spirit to function. And again, as we previously considered in chapter 10, it was associated with music and instruments.

Vs. 11 – “*Saul cast the javelin*” – For the first time Saul tried to hurt or kill David, and he twice made the try.

Vs. 12 – “*Saul was afraid of David*” – Where we might expect to hear of David's fear of Saul it was the other way around. Saul was afraid of David because he was afraid of the Lord who was with him, just as the world hates believers because they

18:13 Therefore Saul removed him from him, and made him his captain over a thousand; and he went out and came in before the people.
18:14 And David behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and the LORD was with him.
18:15 Wherefore when Saul saw that he behaved himself very wisely, he was afraid of him.
18:16 But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out and came in before them.
18:17 And Saul said to David, Behold my elder daughter Merab, her will I give thee to wife: only be thou valiant for me, and fight the LORD's battles. For Saul said, Let not mine hand be upon him, but let the hand of the Philistines be upon him.

fear the true God evident in them (Jn. 15:18-21). We hate those who reduce us to fear. God's way with David was a stinging reminder to Saul of his own failure with the Lord.

Vs. 13-16 – *“Therefore Saul removed him from him”* – In his bitterness Saul put David at arm's length, apparently lowering his position to lead only a thousand men instead of all *“the men of war”* (vs. 5). But we hear no complaint from David. As he walked with the Lord he was a happy, capable servant wherever he landed. Folks saw it and were impressed. The people recognized wisdom in him and loved him for it, and nothing Saul did could take this away from David. He grew as a national hero in spite of Saul's efforts to diminish him.

Even so Jesus Christ has risen to fame among the wise in spite of Satan's determined effort to beat Him down. He, like David over Saul, will one day completely replace Satan's dominance on this earth.

Vs. 17-19 – *“Behold my elder daughter”* – Saul now began a twisted effort to try to use his daughters as a means of putting David in harm’s way, with a secret hope for his death in battle. But his promise of his daughter for David’s continued bravery was already a cheat, for he had promised his daughter as a reward for Goliath’s defeat, and this publicly (17:25). David had fulfilled the condition and earned her hand in marriage, and this publicly. But Saul was losing all hold on integrity and no longer was a man of his word, and this publicly. For he was now shifting the goal post back a bit further. God would have us to be those who swear to our own hurt and will not change our word (Ps. 15:4). And hear Saul’s hypocrisy here, speaking of the Lord as if He really mattered to him. See how he would use the Lord in the same way that he would use David and his own daughters.

“Let not mine hand be upon him” – Why would Saul refrain from dealing with David directly except that he feared losing the popularity of the people? It was always this for Saul, positioning, duplicity, rather than according to what he simply considered right before the Lord and for his people. And then when David did not die Saul gave his eldest daughter to another man (vs. 19). Consider how David later fell to the same with Uriah (Bathsheba’s husband),

18:18 And David said unto Saul, Who am I? and what is my life, or my father's family in Israel, that I should be son in law to the king?

18:19 But it came to pass at the time when Merab Saul's daughter should have been given to David, that she was given unto Adriel the Meholathite to wife.

18:20 And Michal Saul's daughter loved David: and they told Saul, and the thing pleased him.

18:21 And Saul said, I will give him her, that she may be a snare to him, and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him. Wherefore Saul said to David, Thou shalt this day be my son in law in the one of the twain.

putting him into a dangerous place that he might be killed (II Sam. 11).

“*Who am I?*” – Though David was obviously a rising star, he did not see it that way, never allowing his popularity to go to his head.

Vs. 20-21 – “*Michal Saul’s daughter loved David*” – Picture Saul rubbing his hands together with this bit of good news. How fortunate that he had another daughter and that she loved David, providing him with another possible snare. Saul had become like the Jewish leaders of Jesus’ day, always plotting ways to remove that annoying champion who so threatened their influence. This time Saul suggested a more creative angle in putting David into personal contact with Philistines. Obviously to take such a nick from their bodies would mean *dead* bodies. Again, Saul had completely lost track of his word of promise. But you can bet the people had not! They could see how he was messing David around. But God even used

18:22 And Saul commanded his servants, saying, Commune with David secretly, and say, Behold, the king hath delight in thee, and all his servants love thee: now therefore be the king's son in law.

18:23 And Saul's servants spake those words in the ears of David. And David said, Seemeth it to you a light thing to be a king's son in law, seeing that I am a poor man, and lightly esteemed?

18:24 And the servants of Saul told him, saying, On this manner spake David.

this circumstance to lift David, as folks saw how graciously he handled abuse. To remain a servant in spite of abuse is to truly die to self and reflect the character of our Father.

“Thou shalt this day be my son in law” – See again Saul’s devious hypocrisy in this false positive front, hiding his true malicious motives with feigned friendship. Again Saul was abusing a faithful servant and using his daughter in her sincere love. It is unsurprising to see Saul’s daughter later turn against him to side with David.

Vs. 22-24 – *“Behold, the king hath delight in thee”* – Saul’s approach was utterly dishonest. Again David argued his own unworthiness. Though he was highly esteemed by all but Saul, yet he himself would not recognize or expect such honours, nor did he take them lightly. Proverbs suggests the wisdom of never expecting honours (25:6-7). Consider how commonly such low self-esteem resides in the hearts of the great ones for God (Job, “I abhor

18:25 And Saul said, Thus shall ye say to David, The king desireth not any dowry, but an hundred foreskins of the Philistines, to be avenged of the king's enemies. But Saul thought to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines.

18:26 And when his servants told David these words, it pleased David well to be the king's son in law: and the days were not expired.

18:27 Wherefore David arose and went, he and his men, and slew of the Philistines two hundred men; and David brought their foreskins, and they gave them in full tale to the king, that he might be the king's son in law. And Saul gave him Michal his daughter to wife.

myself”, Paul, “less than the least of all saints”). David seemed to fear that he could not provide what a king’s daughter might expect, being a poor man. Thus it seems the great wealth Saul promised to the one defeating Goliath had not transpired either (17:25).

Vs. 25-27 – Since poverty was David’s concern Saul proposed a dowry of deeds rather than debt. But again, he was using his daughter as bait, with a secret purpose to “*make David fall by the hand of the Philistines*”.

Laban was another who used his daughters as a means to secure Jacob’s labours. And he eventually lost his daughters and son-in-law together with their respect. Consider carefully what you do with your children, and your motives for doing it. Be wise to ever keep their best as your highest concern.

David rejoiced when he knew of Saul’s purpose to

18:28 And Saul saw and knew that the LORD was with David, and that Michal Saul's daughter loved him.

18:29 And Saul was yet the more afraid of David; and Saul became David's enemy continually.

18:30 Then the princes of the Philistines went forth: and it came to pass, after they went forth, that David behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul; so that his name was much set by.

give Michal to him in marriage, and that the dowry was placed within his reach. Apparently there was a time limit connected with this challenge, for *“the days were not expired”*. So David quickly took his thousand men (vs. 13) and accomplished the task. Much to Saul’s chagrin he had no choice but to give Michal’s hand to David. That Saul later gave Michal to another in David’s long absence revealed his reluctance from the start (25:44).

Vs. 28-29 – *“Saul saw and knew that the LORD was with David”* – Saul could both see and sense God’s presence and working in young David. See how it only went from bad to worse for Saul as he continued to run from the Lord in his heart. David, that great object of his hatred, just seemed to win with every turn, even winning the love of his own son, daughter, and servants.

“Saul became David’s enemy continually” – His hatred continued its ruinous descent to a more settled, determined thing.

*19:1 And Saul spake to Jonathan his son, and to all his servants, that they should kill David.
19:2 But Jonathan Saul's son delighted much in David: and Jonathan told David, saying,
Saul my father seeketh to kill thee: now therefore, I pray thee, take heed to thyself until
the morning, and abide in a secret place, and hide thyself:*

Vs. 30 – *“The princes of the Philistines went forth”* – Presumably this was against Israel. The Philistines were a determined enemy in those days, refusing to take any defeat as final, serving only to provide David with further opportunity to display wisdom and courage in facing them. In contrast to Saul’s deepening jealous hatred, David’s popularity only rose.

“So that he was much set by” – David had become the leading light of the land, a greatly cherished celebrity and the hero and talk of all. Because *“the Lord was with him”* (vs. 12, 14, 28). All things conspired to elevate David, while at the same time serving to embitter Saul, only filling him more and more with venom.

David on the rise,
Except in Saul’s eyes!

19:1-24 – Days of Dodging Begin

Saul’s hatred comes more out into the open now in this transitional chapter to David’s days of exile.

19:3 And I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where thou art, and I will commune with my father of thee; and what I see, that I will tell thee.

19:4 And Jonathan spake good of David unto Saul his father, and said unto him, Let not the king sin against his servant, against David; because he hath not sinned against thee, and because his works have been to thee-ward very good:

Vs. 1-3 – “*Saul my father seeketh to kill thee*” – With Saul’s request to his son and servants for help in killing David, Jonathan immediately took the news to David. He then set up a situation where he could talk to his father about David, yet close to the place where David was hiding, so that David could hear for himself Saul’s true attitude toward him. This was the beginning of an interesting trend in David which gradually led him into worse error. For it was a subtle deception of father and king, in manipulating Saul to speak where he was not aware of the parameters, rather than just reasoning with him openly in a forthright manner. Where David put every step right in dealing with enemies on the outside, it was the subtleties of life within the family that introduced error into his way. Sometimes the greatest enemies are those within church and family, and within ourselves, rather than those on the outside. Those within are far more subtle and difficult to spot than those without.

Vs. 4-5 – “*Let not the king sin against his servant*” – In pleading with his father, Jonathan’s main point

19:5 For he did put his life in his hand, and slew the Philistine, and the LORD wrought a great salvation for all Israel: thou sawest it, and didst rejoice: wherefore then wilt thou sin against innocent blood, to slay David without a cause?

was David's innocence. He spoke strongly to his father, as a son might have freedom to do, with a focus on Saul's "sin". And he made clear the crucial factor, that David had not done anything against Saul, certainly nothing to warrant his anger and effort to kill him. David will later make the same point as well (24:9; 26:18). In fact from the start David had shown only faithful service, to Saul and to the nation. But jealousy makes no claim to be reasonable. Success alone is enough to enflame it.

Consider this as a counselling situation and the reasons why it failed. Though Jonathan confronted his father with his sin, he failed to press it to the point of Saul actually acknowledging and repenting of his evil. He brought his father only to some agreement to behavioural change. Here is the failure of much of what passes for marital or family counselling. Abused wives and children are returned to homes where only some agreement to make changes has been voiced, without full and proper repentance before the Lord. Therefore with time the abused are often abused again. We must press beyond merely a willingness to change. There

19:6 And Saul hearkened unto the voice of Jonathan: and Saul sware, As the LORD liveth, he shall not be slain

19:7 And Jonathan called David, and Jonathan shewed him all those things. And Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence, as in times past.

must be true repentance before the Lord or lasting reforms are unlikely.

Vs. 6 – “*Saul hearkened unto the voice of Jonathan*” – Saul seems sincere here, and maybe he genuinely thought he was. He heard the good sense in his son’s words to the point of solemnly vowing to leave off his murderous efforts against David.

Vs. 7 – “*Jonathan brought David to Saul*” – Jonathan’s work in restoring David to the king’s presence and service was motivated by the sincere love that characterized him. But most times love alone is not enough. Was Jonathan wise in so easily reuniting David with Saul? Was David wise to trust Saul, or even Jonathan’s assessment of his father? Well, it nearly got him killed! The obvious indication is that it was not wise at all! Again it is one thing to get a verbal concession or agreement, but genuine repentance is quite another thing. Saul had practiced evil in his attitude and actions against David. In so doing he was living in rebellion against the Lord. He must recognize and acknowledge his wicked way before God if he would have God’s help

19:8 And there was war again: and David went out, and fought with the Philistines, and slew them with a great slaughter; and they fled from him.
19:9 And the evil spirit from the LORD was upon Saul, as he sat in his house with his javelin in his hand: and David played with his hand.
19:10 And Saul sought to smite David even to the wall with the javelin: but he slipped away out of Saul's presence, and he smote the javelin into the wall: and David fled, and escaped that night.
19:11 Saul also sent messengers unto David's house, to watch him, and to slay him in the morning: and Michal David's wife told him, saying, If thou save not thy life to night, to morrow thou shalt be slain.

and true healing. None can fault Jonathan's good intentions. But his effort lacked real discernment. It was much like many today who plead for union between churches, but without a proper recognition of wrong and repentance before the Lord in those erring from His truth.

Vs. 8-9 – As before, it is obvious that the evil spirit related to Saul's own thoughts of jealousy with David's successes.

Vs. 10-11 – “*Saul sought to smite David*” – With his angry attack, Saul now actually followed up what might have been a momentary, impetuous act with servants sent to lie in wait for David's life. Saul had lost all hold now on his solemn vow before the Lord to preserve David, all hold on integrity or reasonableness. Yet David had friends on the inside who got word to him through his wife (perhaps the very servants lying in wait?). Now it was both son and daughter working against Saul.

19:12 So Michal let David down through a window: and he went, and fled, and escaped.
19:13 And Michal took an image, and laid it in the bed, and put a pillow of goats' hair for his bolster, and covered it with a cloth.
19:14 And when Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, He is sick.
19:15 And Saul sent the messengers again to see David, saying, Bring him up to me in the bed, that I may slay him.

Vs. 12-13 – Michal used an image to help give the appearance of David sick in bed. This was a small household idol or good-luck charm (Heb. teraphim), such as Rachel stole from Laban's house (Gen. 31:19). Again deception was used in giving David time to get away. It was an arm-of-flesh method rather than simple trust in the Lord to care for His anointed one. And we are left as well the niggling question of why they had an idol in their house. Did the Creator of all really need help from lower beings in keeping His own? Does He need lying house gods and housewives to accomplish His purpose?

Vs. 14-16 – *“Saul sent messengers to take David”* – This apparently was the next day, when those waiting to ambush David returned to Saul empty-handed. So Saul had fully committed himself to David's death, enough to still be determined the next morning.

“She said, He is sick” – Michal's subtle deception now graduates to a blatant lie, as Rahab at Jericho. Do you see how one step onto the slippery slide of

19:16 And when the messengers were come in, behold, there was an image in the bed, with a pillow of goats' hair for his bolster.

19:17 And Saul said unto Michal, Why hast thou deceived me so, and sent away mine enemy, that he is escaped? And Michal answered Saul, He said unto me, Let me go; why should I kill thee?

19:18 So David fled, and escaped, and came to Samuel to Ramah, and told him all that Saul had done to him. And he and Samuel went and dwelt in Naioth.

deception quickly slips down to the next?

Vs. 17 – “*Why hast thou deceived me so?*” – Michal evaded her father’s question, apparently making David’s escape an effort to gallantly direct danger away from her. How right Saul was to refer to David as “*mine enemy*”, for he was loved by all but Saul. Yet none could question the one who was the king, though his character had fallen dangerously beyond reason. It was the fulfilment of the Lord’s words through Samuel in chapter 8 when they first demanded a king. Only Saul’s children dared to resist, yet even this immunity would eventually fail (20:33).

Vs. 18-19 – “*So David...came to Samuel*” – Samuel was surely not surprised to hear of Saul’s evil intentions and generally bad heart. The refusal to repent of our evil comes back to haunt us, poisoning our soul in time. Samuel believed David’s report, knowing better than all the reasons why.

19:19 And it was told Saul, saying, Behold, David is at Naioth in Ramah.

19:20 And Saul sent messengers to take David: and when they saw the company of the prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing as appointed over them, the Spirit of God was upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied.

19:21 And when it was told Saul, he sent other messengers, and they prophesied likewise. And Saul sent messengers again the third time, and they prophesied also.

Naioth was an area in or near Samuel's home town of Ramah, where apparently a "company of prophets" dwelt. Perhaps it was a school of prophets conducted by Samuel. Certainly it was a collection of men who shared his heart.

Vs. 20-21 – "*Saul sent messengers to take David*" – To this place called Naioth, where Samuel was the appointed head, Saul's messengers came to take David. But they were confronted there with the prophets prophesying. This was apparently as in 10:5, with musical instruments and song (I Chron. 25:1). Obviously it was something they all did together. Saul's messengers were overwhelmed by God's Spirit and joined in with the prophets. God was running interference directly now, and this should have been an obvious warning to Saul. Yet he was not listening to God's counsel any more than he was to Jonathan's or to Samuel's. In fact Saul's rabid determination to get David can be seen in the three sets of messengers sent, yet all similarly failed. That Saul would send so many before actually going in person likely suggests great

19:22 Then went he also to Ramah, and came to a great well that is in Sechu: and he asked and said, Where are Samuel and David? And one said, Behold, they be at Naioth in Ramah.
19:23 And he went thither to Naioth in Ramah: and the Spirit of God was upon him also, and he went on, and prophesied, until he came to Naioth in Ramah.
19:24 And he stripped off his clothes also, and prophesied before Samuel in like manner, and lay down naked all that day and all that night. Wherefore they say, Is Saul also among the prophets?

reluctance to go himself. Compare the Pharisees' messengers sent to take Jesus, yet who returned without Him, they more moved by His words than theirs (Jn. 7:45-36).

Vs. 22 – Why the need to ask when Saul had already been told that “*David is at Naioth in Ramah*” (vs. 19). Was Saul stalling? Was he uneasy about facing Samuel at that place where he resided as spiritual head? Was he afraid of such a spiritual hot spot or an encounter with God?

Vs. 23-24 – “*The Spirit of God was upon him also*” – It was perhaps a reminder for Saul of his earlier days when God was able to freely work through him (10:11-12). God graciously dealt with him in a situation designed to move him to repentance in the remembrance of what he once had with the Lord. Perhaps this was the reason why he had hesitated to come here. Yet the fact that David felt the need to flee onward from Naioth (10:1) indicates that there was still no evidence of repentance in Saul

there. Saul had every ability to recognize that it was God fighting against him in protecting David, but he was simply beyond hearing now. He was tipping into a headlong plunge to his ruin.

Class 14 – I Samuel 20

20:1 *And David fled from Naioth in Ramah, and came and said before Jonathan, What have I done? what is mine iniquity? and what is my sin before thy father, that he seeketh my life?*

20:2 *And he said unto him, God forbid; thou shalt not die: behold, my father will do nothing either great or small, but that he will shew it me: and why should my father hide this thing from me? it is not so.*

20:1-23 – Plotting Friends

Vs. 1 – “*What have I done?*” – David left Saul occupied with God’s Spirit and prophets in Ramah and returned to Jonathan with the burning question in his heart “*What is my sin before thy father?*” It had now become quite obvious to David that Saul was committed to his death and could not be trusted in his words. Yet what could David have done to warrant such a murderous effort?

Vs. 2 – Jonathan had no answer on that score. It was a question he himself had essentially raised with his father (19:4-5), yet without receiving any clarity.

“*God forbid; thou shalt not die*” – Jonathan gave only an empty assurance that David would not be killed, offering himself as an inside informer who would surely know his father’s plans concerning David. How very wrong again Jonathan was here! He

20:3 And David sware moreover, and said, Thy father certainly knoweth that I have found grace in thine eyes; and he saith, Let not Jonathan know this, lest he be grieved: but truly as the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, there is but a step between me and death.

seems to even doubt David's concern that Saul was still seeking his life, likely based on his father's solemn vow (19:6). Maybe he was unaware of the rest of the events of chapter 19. Perhaps Saul was already hiding from his son his purpose concerning David, knowing of his son's friendship with that hated son of Jesse (vs. 30). Jonathan had some wonderful traits in his faith in God and courage and passionate love for David, but he comes across a bit too trusting of his father and not very discerning of the real danger involved, of which David was keenly aware. Maybe he just did not want to believe his father capable of such depths. But it was *David's* life at stake! It was no time for living in hollow hopes.

Vs. 3 – David on the other hand was perceptive enough to recognize that Saul would know of their friendship, and therefore would likely be hiding his deadly purpose already. David saw Saul as far more malicious than did Jonathan, and his own life far closer to death. It is not that Jonathan did not care. It is that he was all optimist, tending to see things rosier than reality. Wisdom would lead us to hear

*20:4 Then said Jonathan unto David, Whatsoever thy soul desireth, I will even do it for thee.
20:5 And David said unto Jonathan, Behold, to morrow is the new moon, and I should not fail to sit with the king at meat: but let me go, that I may hide myself in the field unto the third day at even.*

and trust our own heart at times, and to beware too great a trust in the well-meaning but flawed counsel of friends.

Vs. 4 – Jonathan expressed his willingness for whatever David might suggest, though he was likely seeing David as a bit overly paranoid and pessimistic at this point. He refused to believe the worst concerning his father, but was willing to go along with David for the sake of his friend’s greater comfort.

Vs. 5 – “*Behold, to morrow is the new moon*” – David had a plan whereby they could assess Saul’s true heart concerning him. Perhaps it was not so much that David needed to know it, but that Jonathan needed to see. There was a monthly (“*new moon*”) feast that began the next day and apparently would last for a couple days. The Law of Moses specified sacrifices to be offered at the new moon (Num. 28:11-15), which apparently later came to be celebrated as a feast time as well. David would be expected to join the king at his table for this event, but he proposed that he should rather be absent so

20:6 If thy father at all miss me, then say, David earnestly asked leave of me that he might run to Bethlehem his city: for there is a yearly sacrifice there for all the family.

Jonathan could assess his father's reaction.

Vs. 6 – “*David earnestly asked leave of me*” – David then put a lie in Jonathan's mouth. If Saul should ask where David was, Jonathan must say that he had returned to his home to attend a family feast. Again it was a less than honest approach and another slip from David's firm trust upon “*the LORD of hosts*”, as when facing Goliath, for now he was dealing with his problems through his own scheming. His trouble with Saul was just another Goliath of a different kind. But rather than showing confidence that “*the LORD saveth not with sword and spear*”, rather than calm assurance that “*the battle is the LORD's*”, David felt the need to preserve himself through lesser, lower means. It was a moment when these two men of God might better have been calling upon God together rather than hatching a plot involving deception. Compare Rebecca and Jacob doing the same against Isaac (Gen. 27). It is not surprising that there were tragic results in both cases, nearly costing Jonathan his life as well (vs. 33). God may allow for the lies of people to bring about His purposes, but such a means He will not bless with His best. It was a time

20:7 If he say thus, It is well; thy servant shall have peace: but if he be very wroth, then be sure that evil is determined by him.

20:8 Therefore thou shalt deal kindly with thy servant; for thou hast brought thy servant into a covenant of the LORD with thee: notwithstanding, if there be in me iniquity, slay me thyself; for why shouldest thou bring me to thy father?

20:9 And Jonathan said, Far be it from thee: for if I knew certainly that evil were determined by my father to come upon thee, then would not I tell it thee?

for looking to God's strong arm rather than trusting the arm-of-flesh.

Vs. 7 – They were expecting Saul's response to David's absence to be the revelation of his attitude. But could Saul be trusted even if his response was positive? He had already proven himself willing to depart from his word on several counts.

Vs. 8 – *"Therefore thou shalt deal kindly with thy servant"* – Listen carefully here as David pleads for Jonathan's kindness because of their covenant, inviting his friend to kill him if there was in him any evil worthy of death rather than giving him to Saul to do the deed. Do you hear the slightest suggestion of suspicion here? Jonathan heard it! Perhaps we might call it a gentle probe. David was probing his friend, seeking assurance that he was indeed his friend and wholly for his best.

Vs. 9 – *"Far be it from thee"* – Perhaps with a stab of pain in his heart Jonathan picked up on David's

subtle meaning, and he forbade him to even entertain such a thought. “*Far be it from you*” to suspect that I am in any way uniting with my father against you. David’s concern, so gently expressed, was not without foundation. It would certainly make sense for Jonathan to subtly organize David’s removal, if there was any measure of hidden selfishness in him, if he was in any way his father’s son. After all, Jonathan had already too easily returned David to Saul’s presence only for him to be attacked again (19:7-10). A mistake? With Saul already hot for David’s life, Jonathan needed only to make another such oops in judgment, leading David back to Saul on the pretext that things were all fixed up, and David could be killed by Saul. Jonathan could then inherit the throne and kingdom without any stain or suggestion of injustice before servants and people. David could not be faulted for his feelings of uncertainty, and Jonathan did not fault him.

“*If I knew...would not I tell it thee?*” – Oh it was a critical moment in their relationship, a test of their love. David’s friend might take badly such doubt, if there was any measure of pride in him. Our own relationships with others come to such testing times as well. What do you do when facing doubt of your integrity? Yet Jonathan affirmed again the certainty

20:10 Then said David to Jonathan, Who shall tell me? or what if thy father answer thee roughly?

20:11 And Jonathan said unto David, Come, and let us go out into the field. And they went out both of them into the field.

20:12 And Jonathan said unto David, O LORD God of Israel, when I have sounded my father about to morrow any time, or the third day, and, behold, if there be good toward David, and I then send not unto thee, and shew it thee;

20:13 The LORD do so and much more to Jonathan: but if it please my father to do thee evil, then I will shew it thee, and send thee away, that thou mayest go in peace: and the LORD be with thee, as he hath been with my father.

of his good and honest intent toward David, that if he was aware of any evil plan he would most certainly make it known. Do not miss the fact that Jonathan was not in any way offended by David's probing of his integrity. It was good indication of genuine love in him, untouched by pride.

Vs. 10-11 – “*Who shall tell me?*” – David then turned to the question of how they would communicate with each other, but Jonathan was not ready to go there yet. He was far more concerned with David's doubts. So Jonathan led David out to a field where they could speak freely and privately. In his love for this young man Jonathan's first concern was to put David at ease with the truth of their friendship.

Vs. 12-13 – This can be a confusing portion until you understand what is happening. On the surface it might sound like Jonathan was speaking to David as if he himself were the “*LORD God of Israel*”. But with David's expression of doubt, Jonathan felt the

*20:14 And thou shalt not only while yet I live shew me the kindness of the LORD, that I die not:
20:15 But also thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever: no, not when the
LORD hath cut off the enemies of David every one from the face of the earth.
20:16 So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, Let the LORD even
require it at the hand of David's enemies.
20:17 And Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as
he loved his own soul.*

need to again solemnly affirm before the Lord his commitment to David's best. So he was speaking there in the field to both David and the Lord at the same time. He was looking both to heaven and into the eyes of his friend. He could not have more sincerely assured David before the Lord that he would most certainly be true to him. If in understanding his father's attitude he should not honestly communicate this to David, whether for good or bad, then he was calling upon the Lord deal with him.

Vs. 14-17 – Having made firm his assurance of good toward David, Jonathan then went on to require David's kindness toward him and his house as well. Jonathan had fully accepted the fact that David would be the next king. And when that took place Jonathan's life would naturally be at risk, with all of Saul's descendants. And so David was assured by their mutual vow that Jonathan would not deliver him to death while he and Saul's house were still in power, and *Jonathan* was assured that David would

20:18 Then Jonathan said to David, To morrow is the new moon: and thou shalt be missed, because thy seat will be empty.

20:19 And when thou hast stayed three days, then thou shalt go down quickly, and come to the place where thou didst hide thyself when the business was in hand, and shalt remain by the stone Ezel.

20:20 And I will shoot three arrows on the side thereof, as though I shot at a mark.

20:21 And, behold, I will send a lad, saying, Go, find out the arrows. If I expressly say unto the lad, Behold, the arrows are on this side of thee, take them; then come thou: for there is peace to thee, and no hurt; as the LORD liveth.

not deliver him or his house to death when David eventually came to power. It was a covenant of mutual preservation, calling upon God to deliver them over to their enemies should they fail to honour their vow to each other, a covenant of deepest love.

Vs. 18-19 – *“To morrow is the new moon”* – Having now settled the matter of their mutual faithfulness, Jonathan then returned to David’s question of how communication would be made between them (vs. 10). He first restated David’s plan in greater detail. The feast of the new moon would begin the next day, and with David’s empty chair at the table he would certainly be missed. On the 3rd day David was to carefully hide by a certain stone called Ezel, which was in a field close to the city, seemingly a hiding place David had used previously, one familiar to both of them.

Vs. 20-22 – Jonathan would come to the field with

20:22 But if I say thus unto the young man, Behold, the arrows are beyond thee; go thy way: for the LORD hath sent thee away.

20:23 And as touching the matter which thou and I have spoken of, behold, the LORD be between thee and me for ever.

a young boy and shoot arrows toward a mark close to the stone, as if he were doing a bit of target practice. Presumably it was something Jonathan might commonly do. He would then send the lad after the arrows, and what was shouted to the boy in his search for the arrows would be the verbal signal to David. If he shouted that the arrows were beside him, then it would tell David that all was well and he was free to return. But if he should shout to the lad that “*the arrows are beyond thee*”, then it would be Jonathan’s word to David that he must get away. “Beside thee” to come, and “*beyond thee*” to go.

Vs. 23 – “*The LORD be between thee and me for ever*” – Where Jacob and Laban must erect a pillar of cold stones as a witness between them to their mutual bitterness and trouble, Jonathan would keep *the Lord* ever between he and David as a witness to their mutual love. Whenever two people keep “*the LORD between*” them they will know peace and love for each other.

20:24-42 – Saul Exposed

20:24 So David hid himself in the field: and when the new moon was come, the king sat him down to eat meat.

20:25 And the king sat upon his seat, as at other times, even upon a seat by the wall: and Jonathan arose, and Abner sat by Saul's side, and David's place was empty.

20:26 Nevertheless Saul spake not any thing that day: for he thought, Something hath befallen him, he is not clean; surely he is not clean.

Vs. 24-25 – *“David’s place was empty”* – As the feast began the next day all were seated in their normal places, except that David’s seat was empty, as he remained in hiding out in the field.

Vs. 26 – *“Surely he is not clean”* – Saul made no comment except to himself the 1st day concerning David’s absence, presuming that something might have happened to him. But then Saul concluded that it must be that David did not have a chance to see to the appropriate ritual cleansings (Lev. 7:20-21), and so would surely appear at the feast the next day.

Now by Saul coming to this conclusion we must presume that he had carefully seen to his own ceremonial cleansing, while still plotting the death of a man guilty only of stirring Saul’s jealousy. Such hypocrisy! It was a situation that would repeat itself centuries later with the Jewish religious leaders maintaining their ceremonial cleanness while plotting the death of the very Son of David, Jesus Christ (John 18:28).

20:27 And it came to pass on the morrow, which was the second day of the month, that David's place was empty: and Saul said unto Jonathan his son, Wherefore cometh not the son of Jesse to meat, neither yesterday, nor to day?

20:28 And Jonathan answered Saul, David earnestly asked leave of me to go to Bethlehem:

20:29 And he said, Let me go, I pray thee; for our family hath a sacrifice in the city; and my brother, he hath commanded me to be there: and now, if I have found favour in thine eyes, let me get away, I pray thee, and see my brethren. Therefore he cometh not unto the king's table.

20:30 Then Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan, and he said unto him, Thou son of the perverse rebellious woman, do not I know that thou hast chosen the son of Jesse to thine own confusion, and unto the confusion of thy mother's nakedness?

Vs. 27-29 – “Wherefore cometh not the son of Jesse to meat?” – When David failed to make an appearance the next day as well, Saul began asking questions. And as they had planned, Jonathan was ready with the lie David had suggested. Now think about it. With the irrational way in which Saul had been acting and would later respond to the priests of Nob when he suspected them of helping David (22:17), consider how David’s unsuspecting family were put in such jeopardy with this lie! Saul might have immediately fired off a contingent of soldiers to collect David, thinking him there. Jesse’s honest assurance that they had not seen David might easily have been taken for a lie and the whole family wiped out. Saul was in that kind of killing mood! Dishonesty has a way of backfiring, and it was all of God’s grace that it did not happen so here.

Vs. 30 – “Then Saul’s anger was kindled” – The pent-up rage in Saul burst all of its bounds of

surface dignity upon discovering David would not be with them at all, spilling onto Jonathan with the most bitterly hateful words because he had given David leave. It was the first time Saul lashed out at Jonathan as well; another who had only ever faithfully served his king and country, even at risk of his own life; another who had in fact saved Saul's honour through his courage. The sham of killing David for Jonathan's benefit is now fully revealed here in Saul's wicked words and actions toward his son.

“Thou son of the perverse rebellious woman” – It is a difficult phrase to translate, but the feminine participle in the Hebrew does seem to suggest the word *“woman”* supplied in the KJV. It is an interesting thought indeed that Saul might blame what he considered rebellion in his son on his wife rather than on himself. Though we are well aware of rebellion in this father of Jonathan we know nothing of his mother. The idea here may be the more general thought of “son of perverse rebellion”, as suggested in the marginal note. Perhaps Saul was not referring specifically to the character of Jonathan's mother, but to what he saw as stupid stubbornness in his son.

“Unto the confusion of thy mother's nakedness” –

20:31 *For as long as the son of Jesse liveth upon the ground, thou shalt not be established, nor thy kingdom. Wherefore now send and fetch him unto me, for he shall surely die.*
20:32 *And Jonathan answered Saul his father, and said unto him, Wherefore shall he be slain? what hath he done?*

This may be a rather vulgar way of suggesting that the mother who gave Jonathan birth would be ashamed of him.

So David was spot-on with his assessment! Saul was aware of their friendship and was indeed hiding from Jonathan his true purpose concerning David.

Vs. 31 – Saul was sharp enough to recognize that a living David would take the throne over Jonathan. So Saul now gave to his son the task of summoning David to his death.

Vs. 32 – “*Wherefore shall he be slain?*” – Jonathan now displays the “rebellion” of which he was so crudely accused in boldly demanding of his father and king the reason why. It was the telling question that Saul refused to answer, though he had actually just given his reason in vs. 31. It was not what David had *done*, but what he *was*. It was not that he was too *bad*, but that he was too *good*. It was not that he was *unworthy of life*, but that he was *worthy of the throne*.

20:33 And Saul cast a javelin at him to smite him: whereby Jonathan knew that it was determined of his father to slay David.

20:34 So Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger, and did eat no meat the second day of the month: for he was grieved for David, because his father had done him shame.

20:35 And it came to pass in the morning, that Jonathan went out into the field at the time appointed with David, and a little lad with him.

20:36 And he said unto his lad, Run, find out now the arrows which I shoot. And as the lad ran, he shot an arrow beyond him.

Vs. 33 – “*Saul cast the javelin at him to smite him*” – Saul was right off the deep end now. Again, it becomes clear that his actions were not for Jonathan at all, but for himself. The man was so consumed with himself and his own self-preservation that he would even hate his own son and desire his death. It at last all came clear to Jonathan in that moment, that David had in fact been sharper in his estimation of Saul than he.

Vs. 34 – “*Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger*” – Jonathan stormed out in a rage for the shame his father was bringing upon his name, and full of grief for David and for what he now recognized his father to be. How jealousy and rage bring a man low and make of him a fool.

Vs. 35-39 – And so it was that Jonathan must go out to the field the next morning to give the appointed signal to his friend in the time and way upon which they had agreed. He shot arrows out toward the rock where he knew David would be

20:37 And when the lad was come to the place of the arrow which Jonathan had shot, Jonathan cried after the lad, and said, Is not the arrow beyond thee?
20:38 And Jonathan cried after the lad, Make speed, haste, stay not. And Jonathan's lad gathered up the arrows, and came to his master.
20:39 But the lad knew not any thing: only Jonathan and David knew the matter.
20:40 And Jonathan gave his artillery unto his lad, and said unto him, Go, carry them to the city.

hiding, and then sent a young boy he had brought along to go fetch them. As the boy came to the place where the arrows had landed Jonathan shouted the key words “*beyond thee*”, signifying David’s need to fly like an arrow. He even added the urgent words “*make speed, haste, stay not*”, implying gravest danger in any delay. They were words that would have made no sense to the boy, who was perhaps even then picking up the arrows saying, “No, they are right here sir”. But while the boy collected Jonathan’s arrows David collected the meaning of his words and understood his grave danger. Though for anybody who might have been sent to secretly keep an eye on Jonathan all would have seemed innocent enough.

Vs. 40 – “*Jonathan gave his artillery unto his lad*” – After so brief a “target practice” Jonathan handed his bow and arrows to the young boy and sent him back to the house. Again, it all must have seemed rather strange to the lad, but only strange and not suspicious. David, and now Jonathan, presumed

20:41 And as soon as the lad was gone, David arose out of a place toward the south, and fell on his face to the ground, and bowed himself three times: and they kissed one another, and wept one with another, until David exceeded.

the possibility of Saul's suspicion and surveillance, the same that Samuel feared in 16:2.

Vs. 41 – “*David arose out the place*” – Perhaps as if to look for a missing arrow Jonathan then walked out toward David's place of hiding. And as soon as the boy was out of sight, with sadness David stepped out to meet his friend. The message had been communicated and nothing more need be said between them, but they needed this, to see each other again, perhaps for the last time! It was a dangerous move under the circumstances to even attempt such a meeting, but they both knew what this meant. It was good bye! And passion does not always connect with good sense. It is God who puts this kind of love in one's heart for another.

“*Bowed himself three times*” – David's bowing showed his humility and greatest respect for Jonathan, who had shown only love and respect and faithfulness to David. Though David knew he was anointed to reign in the place of Jonathan, yet he would honour this one who was still the nation's prince at that time, just as he will later honour even

20:42 And Jonathan said to David, Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the LORD, saying, The LORD be between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed for ever. And he arose and departed: and Jonathan went into the city.

Saul in preserving him when he had opportunity to kill him.

“Until David exceeded” – This is another difficult piece of translation work. The basic idea of the Hebrew verb here is to become great or powerful. There came a point in their weeping together where David in some way came to power, either to the point of being overwhelmed with his grief or to the point where he got control of his grief. Perhaps most likely the latter.

Though these two were among the strongest and bravest men in battle recorded in God’s book, yet how warmly affectionate they were in their tender love for each other. Manly courage need not be cold and indifferent as the world often paints it, but can be charged with the most fervent of feelings and passion.

Vs. 42 – *“Jonathan said to David, Go in peace”* – They could not linger for all was danger for David, perhaps for them both. But they would part with *“the LORD between”* them, in the assurance that

they would always be committed to the Lord's purpose for the other and the very best for each other. As Eugene Merrill pointed out, "Jonathan was giving up a kingdom for the love of a friend".

From this point David was on the run as public enemy number 1 from Saul's perspective, until the day Saul and Jonathan died together in battle.

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Ponder Points

Consider the suggestion of a redemptive analogy here;

- The father's wrath was the danger.
- The son's love and covenant relation was the protection.
- The only hope was in trusting the son's word of honour.
- The son was willing to subject himself to his father's wrath, even at threat of death, for the sake of the one he loved.

“And David arose
and fled that day
for fear of Saul...”

(1 Sam. 21:10)

Class 15 – I Samuel 21-22

21:1 Then came David to Nob to Ahimelech the priest; and Ahimelech was afraid at the meeting of David, and said unto him, Why art thou alone, and no man with thee?

Having fled from Saul's wrath, David became a fugitive and remained so throughout the rest of this book of I Samuel. There were important lessons for him to learn during these years on the run; lessons from the furnace of trials; lessons only learned there. He would begin to understand the terrible cost of a lie, and would see more clearly how the Lord is so able to deliver those who trust and call on Him. According to the ancient titles of the psalms it would appear that many of David's psalms were composed during these desperate years of flight; psalms of praise and petition and trust.

21:1-9 – David to Ahimelech

Vs. 1 – *“Then came David to Nob to Ahimelech the priest”* – Nob was a small town of priests and their families within the tribal area of Benjamin and just north of Jerusalem. David had run to Samuel and now to Ahimelech the priest rather than to his home as we might naturally expect. He probably assumed religious men immune to Saul's vengeance, an

21:2 *And David said unto Ahimelech the priest, The king hath commanded me a business, and hath said unto me, Let no man know any thing of the business whereabout I send thee, and what I have commanded thee: and I have appointed my servants to such and such a place.*

immunity his father's house could not expect.

“Ahimelech was afraid at the meeting of David” – The priest's fear was likely based on some awareness of the monster Saul was becoming, and perhaps of his soured attitude toward David. When leadership goes bad people live in fear. The people were probably far more aware of the details of events around Saul and David than we might suspect. The ways of royalty are still a matter of greatest intrigue among commoners, especially with a rising star like young David in the ranks, and with the smell of scandal emanating from the palace. Being alone, David looked like what he was, a fugitive. Ahimelech perhaps recognized the danger in helping one on the run from Saul.

Vs. 2 – *“The king hath commanded me a business”* – How very quick David was with a believable story, yet all lies, and now before God's priest! Do you see the growing dependence on dishonesty in him? Proverbs proclaims that *“a lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it”* (26:28). David was actually hating God's servant in his falsehood. In fact, he in

a sense killed 85 priests with his tongue that day (22:22). See how the effects of lying go from bad to worse in David's life. He effectively removed from Ahimelech the ability to know what he was actually dealing with, that he might proceed according to full awareness of the truth. It may be that circumstance seemed to necessitate this approach in David's thinking, but no circumstance has the power to sanctify sin.

With his claim that he was on a *secret* mission, David exempted himself from the need to give further details. He excused the fact that he was alone with the story that he had sent his men on to some designated place. Surely the priest was not so foolish as to actually believe David's tale. But Ahimelech was caught in the middle. How could he call David the liar he was? He was in trouble if David was telling the truth and he did not help him, and in trouble if David was lying and he did help. Perhaps he took some comfort in the fact that he could not know that David was now a renegade, and a lying one. But little did he know that this would not be justification enough for Saul.

Though Jesus stated in the gospels that David shared the bread with "*them which were with him*" (Mk. 2:26), this likely refers to those who later

- 21:3 *Now therefore what is under thine hand? give me five loaves of bread in mine hand, or what there is present.*
- 21:4 *And the priest answered David, and said, There is no common bread under mine hand, but there is hallowed bread; if the young men have kept themselves at least from women.*
- 21:5 *And David answered the priest, and said unto him, Of a truth women have been kept from us about these three days, since I came out, and the vessels of the young men are holy, and the bread is in a manner common, yea, though it were sanctified this day in the vessel.*
-

joined him rather than any running with him at this point.

Vs. 3-4 – *“There is hallowed bread”* – David wanted 5 loaves of bread to last him a while under the pretence that he had other men to feed. But the priest had only the old bread from the table of showbread, which had been replaced by 12 fresh loaves (Ex. 25:23-30). Strictly speaking only the priests were to eat this bread, and in the holy place, *“for it is most holy unto him”* (Lev. 24:5-9). Being *“hallowed”* or ceremonially clean bread, the priest was willing to give it if they had not slept with their wives recently (Ex. 19:15; Lev. 15:16-18).

Consider the implication that the tabernacle must then have been set up there at Nob at that time, though the ark remained at Kirjath-Jearim.

Vs. 5-6 – *“The vessels of the young men are holy”* – David had just come directly from three days in the

21:6 *So the priest gave him hallowed bread: for there was no bread there but the shewbread, that was taken from before the LORD, to put hot bread in the day when it was taken away.*
21:7 *Now a certain man of the servants of Saul was there that day, detained before the LORD; and his name was Doeg, an Edomite, the chiefest of the herdmen that belonged to Saul.*

bush waiting for Jonathan's report on his father's attitude. So he assured the priest that he and his imaginary men had been three days without access to their women. David's mention of "*vessels*" here in vs. 5 seems to refer to their physical bodies, as in I Thessalonians 4:4.

Jesus used this event in His Sabbath debate with the Pharisees to illustrate that service to man surpasses ceremonial laws in importance (Matt. 12:3-4). It was more important to see to David's need than to keep strict ritual regulations as to who should eat such bread.

Vs. 7 – Saul's chief herdsman, Doeg, happened to be there that day. That he was "*detained before the LORD*" suggests he was perhaps there for cleansing from some uncleanness. The particular reason did not matter, only that the Lord allowed him to be there to witness the priest's help given to David, with the most devastating result to follow (22:9ff).

Vs. 8-9 – "*I have neither brought my sword nor my weapons with me*" – The story was wearing a bit

21:8 *And David said unto Ahimelech, And is there not here under thine hand spear or sword? for I have neither brought my sword nor my weapons with me, because the king's business required haste.*
21:9 *And the priest said, The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom thou slewest in the valley of Elah, behold, it is here wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod: if thou wilt take that, take it: for there is no other save that here. And David said, There is none like that; give it me.*
21:10 *And David arose and fled that day for fear of Saul, and went to Achish the king of Gath.*

thin! The “*king’s business*” must surely have been of a military nature. And would a soldier actually engage in such a mission without taking any weapon at all? It would be like a batsman hurrying out to the pitch having forgotten to bring a bat!

“The sword of Goliath...is here wrapped in a cloth” – We are not told why David’s trophy of Goliath’s sword was there. Perhaps it had become a kind of national treasure, and thus kept in the tabernacle. None but David, who won it, would be allowed the privilege of its use. Even so none but the Son of David is worthy to wield “*the sharp sword with two edges*” (Rev. 2:12 & 19:15).

21:10-15 – David to Achish

Vs. 10 – “*And David...went to Achish the king of Gath*” – Of every surrounding place to which David might flee, why to Gath? It was to Goliath’s hometown that he went and carrying the sword of their fallen champion! Perhaps it was the only land

21:11 And the servants of Achish said unto him, Is not this David the king of the land? did they not sing one to another of him in dances, saying, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands?

21:12 And David laid up these words in his heart, and was sore afraid of Achish the king of Gath.

where David was confident Saul would be afraid to pursue him. Perhaps it was a bit of reverse logic, thinking it so far out that it would be the place least suspected for David to appear? But it nearly backfired on David. Now running through fear of Saul, he ran right into fear of Achish (vs. 12). Was David walking in the fear of the Lord in those desperate days? That Psalm 56, according to its title, is thought to be written by David at that time perhaps indicates that his walk with the Lord was a flickering light.

Vs. 11-12 – *“Is not this David the king of the land?”* – David was quickly recognized, captured, and accused before Achish. It was a desperately dangerous situation!

It is amazing how greatly the Philistines were aware of events across Israel’s border, even to the point of these servants actually recognizing David. They had seen him only briefly and from a distance. And why would they think David to be *“the king of the land”*? Perhaps they saw national rule as a strength

21:13 And he changed his behaviour before them, and feigned himself mad in their hands, and scrabbled on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle fall down upon his beard.

issue rather than an anointing or dynasty issue. David had shown such heroic courage above all others over their champion it seems they simply assumed he would replace Saul as king.

Vs. 13 – *“He changed his behaviour before them”* – David’s response was to put on an act as if he were insane. There is an awful irony in Israel’s national hero stooping to this! Departure from the Lord and from the land only ever leads down to darker things. But then David would not be the first or last to be found playing the fool after leaving the Lord’s presence and pleasure. See how a man of faith and courage comes to unbelief and fear when his trust is centred in himself rather than in the Lord. So again David was acting as something he was not; something more than he actually was before Ahimelech and something less than he actually was now before Achish. Compare Abraham and Isaac lying about their wives before Pharaoh and Abimelech. The fear of the Lord frees us to live out what we actually are. Yet remember that David was writing psalms in that same era, recorded in the Book. Though led away by the world at times, he was ever given to running back to the Lord. It was

21:14 Then said Achish unto his servants, Lo, ye see the man is mad: wherefore then have ye brought him to me?

21:15 Have I need of mad men, that ye have brought this fellow to play the mad man in my presence? shall this fellow come into my house?

the source of David's strength and deliverance. Not that he lived in the Lord's presence at every moment, not that he never failed in his faith, but that he always ran back.

Vs. 14-15 – “*Lo, ye see the man is mad*” – So it was a pretty good act! The servants were driven out with their ears burning from the heated chewing-out they received. We are given everything here short of the swear words Achish likely used. This was not only a matter of David's stunningly realistic performance. It was the Lord at work in Achish in turning his attitude. Yet his servants were correct were they not? This *was* in fact Israel's champion and the one who would reign as their king. Here in their very hands was the cause of their past and future undoing. Understand how close to death David was here, yet this was God's deliverance. Though he was not completely right in his heart and way, yet he was still clinging to the Lord in the sincerity of his faith, perhaps now with renewed vigour. And see how he found heaven's help, even in the imperfect condition of his heart before the Lord. Understand how very close to greatest victory

22:1 David therefore departed thence, and escaped to the cave Adullam: and when his brethren and all his father's house heard it, they went down thither to him.

the Philistines were here, yet it was denied them by the only true God. When *without* the Lord, the solution to your problem or potential problem can be *that close*, right in your very hands, and you never discover it! When *with* the Lord you can be right in the very hands of your greatest threat and find deliverance. Compare Peter in Herod's prison fully expecting to die the next morning, yet miraculously delivered by God's angel (Acts 12).

Consider the image of Jesus Christ in David, Israel's great champion, there before Achish. He was on his own, having been driven out by his own people. Even so Jesus proved Himself to be Israel's greatest Champion, yet He was driven out by the leadership of His own people, and forsaken by all, turning, as David, to the world.

22:1-5 – David's Followers

Vs. 1 – “*Escaped to the cave of Adullam*” – This area is southwest of Bethlehem, close to the Philistine border. Compare Psalm 57, written while there according to the title.

What an incredible comfort it must have been to David for his entire family to find and join him in his place of hiding! How full of significance this event! How appropriate that the first to side him were his own people. It was the first step, the beginning of the transfer of the entire kingdom to David. But as well, it was our gracious God sending His encouragement to David when he was right at the bottom of it, crouched in a cold cave somewhere near the border, fearful of the powers of Israel and Philistia to east and west, rejected on both sides, seemingly without a friend in the world. And then his family arrived and had come to stay! What a lift that must have been! What a blessing from God! In their coming;

- They were declaring themselves on David's side.
- They were denying Saul as their king and accepting David's anointing to rule.
- They were standing with David in his danger and embracing that danger as their own.

Perhaps they recognized that they would likely soon become a target of Saul's wrath as well, or perhaps already had. Yet what a tremendous responsibility it was to accept their support, for it put them in the same peril in which David lived. And what a terrible

22:2 And every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them: and there were with him about four hundred men.

chance they were taking in joining a force so small. Compare the small group that clung to David again in the days of Absalom's treason (II Sam. 15). Theirs was a response based on faith rather than earthly advantage or popularity. Is it not the same step of faith for all who stand with Jesus Christ in our day?

Vs. 2 – *“Every one that was in distress...in debt...discontented”* – David's family was the beginning of others joining as well, until they had actually become a band of about 400. That it was the distressed and debtors and discontented who came might sound more like trouble than the solid calibre of citizens on which to found a kingdom. But is this not the kind Jesus has built His following on as well? Did we not come to Him in the same way; distressed, debtors, and discontented? We could not find true contentment under Satan's evil rule and kingdom of darkness. We were distressed under the crushing load of our sin debt. We too have joined ourselves with Christ's relatively small group of followers, so hated by the evil prince of this world. Yet the day comes when it will all be ours in Jesus Christ, that One already anointed to be King

22:3 *And David went thence to Mizpeh of Moab: and he said unto the king of Moab, Let my father and my mother, I pray thee, come forth, and be with you, till I know what God will do for me.*
22:4 *And he brought them before the king of Moab: and they dwelt with him all the while that David was in the hold.*
22:5 *And the prophet Gad said unto David, Abide not in the hold; depart, and get thee into the land of Judah. Then David departed, and came into the forest of Hareth.*

of kings.

It is not wrong to be discontented with bad leadership if it truly is evil before God. Compare Rehoboam's kingdom strengthened by those driven south through Jeroboam's godless rule (II Chron.11:13-17). Their coming was a good thing because it was based on right reasons for separating. Compare those joining Asa's godly rule (II Chron. 15:9).

Vs. 3-4 – Why would David take his parents beyond the Dead Sea to Moab for refuge? Because their roots were there, Jesse being a grandson of Boaz and Ruth the Moabitess (Ruth 4:21-22). It seems the parents remained there for several years until David at last came to power in Hebron, while the brothers remained with David.

Vs. 5 – “*Abide not in the hold*” – This unknown prophet of God was sent with word of danger in remaining “*in the hold*”, presumably referring to the

22:6 When Saul heard that David was discovered, and the men that were with him, (now Saul abode in Gibeah under a tree in Ramah, having his spear in his hand, and all his servants were standing about him;)

22:7 Then Saul said unto his servants that stood about him, Hear now, ye Benjamites; will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards, and make you all captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds;

cave at Adullam to which David and his followers had returned. Being warned away from the border and further into Judah, it seems this particular danger was from the Philistine side. Perhaps Achish, through his informers, had discovered David's identity and hiding place, and that he had been fooled by David's ruse. This prophet, Gad, would later become "*David's seer*" (II Sam. 24:11).

22:6-23 – Priests of Nob Slain

Vs. 6 – "*Saul heard that David was discovered*" – The scene now shifts to Saul in Gibeah with his servants gathered around him. With his shift to the east David had been picked up on Saul's radar of informers, and the king had just been briefed. So David was pinched between enemies and their informants whichever way he turned. And perhaps for the first time Saul heard of the growing band of men who had joined with his young enemy.

Vs. 7 – See how it was Saul himself who first publicly pointed to David as a potential contender

22:8 That all of you have conspired against me, and there is none that sheweth me that my son hath made a league with the son of Jesse, and there is none of you that is sorry for me, or sheweth unto me that my son hath stirred up my servant against me, to lie in wait, as at this day?

for the throne. Nobody else was saying this. David was not suggesting it. Yet perhaps Saul was picking up on talk among the people. Neither was David campaigning for followers. They were joining him of their own initiative. But this factor added to Saul's growing apprehensions.

“Hear now, ye Benjamites” – David, of the tribe of Judah, would not take care of those of Benjamin like Saul of Benjamin did. Saul was playing on tribal loyalties. Because Saul's followers could not serve him out of respect for his good leadership, all he had to offer were the advantages he could give. On the other hand those with David obviously followed for reasons other than any earthly advantages, even risking their lives. When earthly advantage is all we have to offer we have already lost the heart of a truly faithful following and the essence of good leadership. Yet earthly or sensual advantage is all that Satan has to offer in holding his followers. His wrangle with God over Job's heart indicates that he reckons that is how God keeps followers as well (Job 1:9-11).

Vs. 8 – *“All of you have conspired against me”* – Oh it is such a sad song Saul moans in his twisted paranoia. None had informed him of the “problem” of Jonathan’s friendship with David. Oh poor me! My son and servants are scheming against me. Nobody loves me! Everybody hates me! Actually none were really against Saul. It is just that they were not with him against David. They had more cause to love David than to hate him, and refused to join Saul in his hatred. See how Saul seeks to manipulate his people with his griping complaints and promise of possessions and stirring of tribal pride, rather than really showing them nobility and heroic courage in doing right.

“My son hath stirred up my servant against me, to lie in wait” – Oh look well at what we see in Saul here! How wickedly he twists the truth! Jonathan had done no such thing! And David was doing no such thing! How he presents David’s excellent spirit and servant character as malicious aggression! Saul himself was the only aggressor in this whole affair. How he twists the sincere love motivating Jonathan and David into the same kind of vicious hate that so filled him. Here is a classic case where wisdom warns against believing only one side of a story (Prov. 18:13, 17), for this was so far from reality.

22:9 Then answered Doeg the Edomite, which was set over the servants of Saul, and said, I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob, to Ahimelech the son of Ahitub.
22:10 And he enquired of the LORD for him, and gave him victuals, and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine.
22:11 Then the king sent to call Ahimelech the priest, the son of Ahitub, and all his father's house, the priests that were in Nob: and they came all of them to the king.

Vs. 9 – *“Then answered Doeg the Edomite”* – Doeg was a man enjoying earthly advantage through Saul, a fact again highlighted here (21:7). His selfishness was the driving force in his words, perhaps fearing the loss of his position, perhaps even seeking promotion for loyalty to Saul, yet at the priests’ expense.

Vs. 10 – *“And he inquired of the LORD for him”* – This was a lie, for the man never saw this happen, but it added drama and import to his tale. And so *what* if Ahimelech did inquire of the Lord for David? Would Saul deny David the Lord’s counsel through the priest? Was the Lord also suspect now, as perhaps wickedly moving against Saul in some dark conspiracy? Compare Psalm 52 as possibly written at this time according to the title.

Vs. 11 – *“Then the king sent to call Ahimelech the priest”* – It was a radical overkill to include all the priests when only Ahimelech was involved. Doeg mentioned none but Ahimelech. Yet see how the involvement widens in Saul’s troubled heart. Oh

*22:12 And Saul said, Hear now, thou son of Ahitub. And he answered, Here I am, my lord.
22:13 And Saul said unto him, Why have ye conspired against me, thou and the son of Jesse,
in that thou hast given him bread, and a sword, and hast enquired of God for him, that
he should rise against me, to lie in wait, as at this day?*

the fear as the priests came to Saul's call. It was perhaps what Ahimelech feared when first David came to him alone (21:1).

Vs. 12-13 – “*Why have ye conspired against me?*” – The KJV “*ye*” indicates the plural here. Saul was levelling this accusation at all the priests together. Should he not rather have begun with questions concerning *what* the man did and *if* he did it, rather than *why* he did what Saul knew he did? He believed the worst concerning a fellow Israelite and man of God through the word of only one foreign Edomite. Saul made no effort to confirm the accusation with a 2nd witness as the law required. It was his own paranoid insecurity driving him to this madness. He was running from everybody now, seeing all joining the Lord against him. But again, there was nothing in Ahimelech's actions that was against Saul, but only for David. And again Saul presents David in a sinister light as lying in wait for his blood. Beware the danger of perceiving people as against you before you really know this to be true.

22:14 Then Ahimelech answered the king, and said, And who is so faithful among all thy servants as David, which is the king's son in law, and goeth at thy bidding, and is honourable in thine house?

22:15 Did I then begin to enquire of God for him? be it far from me: let not the king impute any thing unto his servant, nor to all the house of my father: for thy servant knew nothing of all this, less or more.

22:16 And the king said, Thou shalt surely die, Ahimelech, thou, and all thy father's house.

Vs. 14-15 – “*Let not the king impute any thing to his servant*” – Ahimelech’s answer was good, but wasted on Saul. With his angry suspicion so stirred, his ears might just as well have dropped right off! The priest spoke only truth. He spoke nothing against Saul but only good of David. He had no cause to doubt David’s loyalty or to think him working against his king and father-in-law.

“*Did I then begin to inquire of God for him?* – This is perhaps not a denial, but in the sense of “*Did I [only] then begin to inquire of God for him?*” “Would I not have been willing to do so any time? Since when is it a crime to ask of God in a man’s behalf! If it be so, then I have been a criminal all of my working life! Please do not make us out to be what we are not, for we knew nothing of any such concerns or conspiracy.”

Vs. 16 – “*Thou shalt surely die, Ahimelech*” – Saul had obviously made this decision long before hearing (or *not* really hearing) anything Ahimelech

22:17 And the king said unto the footmen that stood about him, Turn, and slay the priests of the LORD: because their hand also is with David, and because they knew when he fled, and did not shew it to me. But the servants of the king would not put forth their hand to fall upon the priests of the LORD.

22:18 And the king said to Doeg, Turn thou, and fall upon the priests. And Doeg the Edomite turned, and he fell upon the priests, and slew on that day fourscore and five persons that did wear a linen ephod.

22:19 And Nob, the city of the priests, smote he with the edge of the sword, both men and women, children and sucklings, and oxen, and asses, and sheep, with the edge of the sword.

had to say in their defence. And again, why such a twist to include all? It is as if Saul saw the whole world against him and was ready to kill them all!

Vs. 17 – *“The servants of the king would not put forth their hand”* – Saul’s servants were perhaps more ready to take out Saul at this point than to obey his murderous purpose against *“the priests of the LORD”*. It seems they feared the Lord more than the king, and so they simply refused to obey!

Vs. 18-19 – *“Turn thou, and fall upon the priests”* – Now Saul made it more personal, speaking to an individual rather than a group. Should Doeg refuse to obey, Saul might very easily kill him together with the priests. Yet perhaps there was more willingness in the man to obey this command than there should have been. As a foreigner there was likely less of a true fear of the Lord in Doeg. And when the dust settled he had killed them all! Then Saul slaughtered the entire city of the priests! It was a

22:20 And one of the sons of Ahimelech the son of Ahitub, named Abiathar, escaped, and fled after David.

22:21 And Abiathar shewed David that Saul had slain the LORD's priests.

total ban! Behold how he handled “*the priests of the LORD*” as he should have handled the Amalekites (I Sam. 15), fully accomplishing here what he failed to accomplish there! It seems he was making a public example of them, seeking to put fear in all against showing any kindness toward David. Again, it is bad leadership that must motivate with terror.

Saul becomes a small foreshadow of the coming Antichrist now as he begins to feel the weight of heaven and earth against him. Though it was the Lord allowing this toward the fulfilment of what He had long before promised upon Eli’s house (2:27-36), yet it is Saul who will give account for his evil in bringing it.

Vs. 20 – “*Abiathar escaped, and fled after David*” – Only Ahimelech’s son, Abiathar, survived this treacherous massacre and ran to David. Note how everybody seemed to know how to find David except Saul (vs. 1-2; 23:16-18). In a measure Saul was right in seeing all against him, but only in their desire to protect David.

22:22 And David said unto Abiathar, I knew it that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul: I have occasioned the death of all the persons of thy father's house.

22:23 Abide thou with me, fear not: for he that seeketh my life seeketh thy life: but with me thou shalt be in safeguard.

Vs. 21-22 – David was seeing even more clearly now the powerful, unruly menace Saul had become, like a wildly enraged bull running loose in a crowd of people. To such depths a soul falls when refusing repentance!

“I have occasioned the death of all the persons of thy father’s house” – David recognized then that it was his lie that brought this on, though Ahimelech might still have been inclined to help him had he known the truth. Is David’s fault in this some of the reason why Abiathar eventually joined those against David? (I Ki. 1:25) Is this true repentance in David? It is not the last of David’s falsehoods, so it would not seem so.

Vs. 23 – *“Abide thou with me”* – Being an outcast now, Abiathar could only join the outcast band. David’s promise of protection displays his trust in the Lord’s protection of His anointed one.

Ponder Points

Consider how Saul's pursuit of David becomes an analogy for the old and new natures in the child of God, and of the church in the world;

- As Saul, so Satan, together with our old nature, is rejected and appointed for eventual removal.
- As David, so Jesus Christ, together with our new nature, is already anointed and appointed to rise and eventually reign.
- Though the old is still in power and bitterly persecuting the new, it is essentially powerless, and will ultimately be completely removed and replaced by the new.

“The LORD judge
between me and thee,
and the LORD avenge me of thee:
but mine hand
shall not be upon thee”

(1 Sam. 24:12)

Class 16 – I Samuel 23-24

23:1 Then they told David, saying, Behold, the Philistines fight against Keilah, and they rob the threshingfloors.

23:2 Therefore David enquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go and smite these Philistines? And the LORD said unto David, Go, and smite the Philistines, and save Keilah.

23:1-12 – David at Keilah

Vs. 1 – “*The Philistines fight against Keilah*” – Keilah was a city on the western side of Judah, very close to Adullam. Though it was a walled city their threshing areas would have been out near their fields and unprotected, and the Philistines began helping themselves. What a desperately disappointing disaster to labour all through the growing season in ploughing, planting, cutting, gathering, and threshing, only for the harvest to then be robbed from the threshing floor! It made their year of labour all for nothing and left them to hunger through the winter.

Vs. 2 – “*David inquired of the LORD*” – Being right there at Adullam, David was immediately aware of the situation before word got to Saul in Gibeah. This is the first record of David asking his God for guidance. He was likely always given to this, but now we have the record of it (3 times in this

chapter). It was a key turning point, when David first began to take on kingly responsibilities in protecting his people. Again it highlights the contrast between David and Saul. Saul was never really interested in the Lord's involvement. And while Saul acted the irresponsible fool in pursuing David, David rather acted the responsible king in protecting his people. Again David showed his courage and faith in God to face the Philistines with such a small band.

“Shall I go and smite these Philistines?” – Hear the note of confidence in David's words here. He did not ask of merely attacking the Philistines, but whether he should *“go and smite”* them. He did not speak of *attempts* but of *accomplishment*. He was talking victory from the start.

Though not strictly responsible, the Lord gave David the thumbs-up because He wanted His people protected. Is not the same still true today? Does the Lord not still wish to see His people cared for, regardless of whether one is officially appointed to such a role? We might shake our heads at some who are appointed to spiritual leadership yet who do not behave responsibly, leaving needs unattended. Yet for us to then leave those same needs unhandled constitutes our own failure as

23:3 *And David's men said unto him, Behold, we be afraid here in Judah: how much more then if we come to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines?*
23:4 *Then David enquired of the LORD yet again. And the LORD answered him and said, Arise, go down to Keilah; for I will deliver the Philistines into thine hand.*
23:5 *So David and his men went to Keilah, and fought with the Philistines, and brought away their cattle, and smote them with a great slaughter. So David saved the inhabitants of Keilah.*

well. In asking the Lord whether we should step forward to meet the needs, He would likely lead us to the same as He did David here, to take up that caring role though not officially appointed to it.

Vs. 3 – David’s men were not so sure about such a move. They were in hot water enough in their efforts to avoid trouble coming at them from their own people, and now David would actually propose aggression against the Philistines, drawing negative attention from across the border as well.

Vs. 4 – *“David inquired of the LORD yet again”* – Their fears sent David back to the Lord for confirmation, and the Lord was willing for this. Not only did they have His permission, but they had His assurance of victory as well. God is willing for such a second approach when from a man who loves Him (as with Gideon’s double fleece). When from one who fundamentally doubts Him, He is perhaps not so patient.

23:6 And it came to pass, when Abiathar the son of Ahimelech fled to David to Keilah, that he came down with an ephod in his hand.

23:7 And it was told Saul that David was come to Keilah. And Saul said, God hath delivered him into mine hand; for he is shut in, by entering into a town that hath gates and bars.

23:8 And Saul called all the people together to war, to go down to Keilah, to besiege David and his men.

Vs. 5 – David arrived to the rescue of the besieged city of Keilah. No details of his attack or tactics are given, only that the Lord was good for His words and gave a remarkable victory with a “*great slaughter*” of the enemy, and spoils recovered. In fact it does not matter what approach David used. It was God who gave success. It seems David and company were able then to dwell in that city for a time, enjoying a measure of celebrity status among them.

Vs. 6 – We were told earlier that Abiathar came to David when he was in “*the hold*” or cave of Adullam (22:5, 20-23), which was near Keilah. This note was given because David will later access the ephod to inquire of God.

Vs. 7-8 – Word of David dwelling in Keilah came to Saul and moved him to go down after him. No word of trouble with the Philistines down there seems to have been known or entertained by Saul. We hear of no remorse in him that he failed in his kingly duty to protect his people. We hear of no appreciation that David handled the task in his behalf. We hear

23:9 *And David knew that Saul secretly practised mischief against him; and he said to Abiathar the priest, Bring hither the ephod.*

of no inquiring of God in Saul, seeking His guidance. Saul seemed only to assume that God was with him against David.

See how God simply remains quiet when dumb choices are independently made. If we genuinely wish to know and do His will, as David, we will have it from Him. But if we make no or insincere request He quietly allows us to go our own way.

Saul actually proposed taking over where the Philistines left off in besieging the city to demand that David be handed over. He assumed a siege would be involved and thus that the city would resist giving David to him. It was lining up for civil war, pitting Saul against all who favoured David, i.e. essentially his entire nation.

Vs. 9 – *“David knew that Saul secretly practiced mischief”* – Do you hear the irony here? It was not as *“secretly practiced”* as Saul would have liked. Both sides had their informers. It seems there were no secrets in Saul’s house where David was concerned. Jonathan was likely the master-mind behind this line of communication with David. It

23:10 Then said David, O LORD God of Israel, thy servant hath certainly heard that Saul seeketh to come to Keilah, to destroy the city for my sake.
23:11 Will the men of Keilah deliver me up into his hand? will Saul come down, as thy servant hath heard? O LORD God of Israel, I beseech thee, tell thy servant. And the LORD said, He will come down.
23:12 Then said David, Will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul? And the LORD said, They will deliver thee up.
23:13 Then David and his men, which were about six hundred, arose and departed out of Keilah, and went whithersoever they could go. And it was told Saul that David was escaped from Keilah; and he forbare to go forth.

was a question of how the rescued, adoring people of Keilah would respond when demand was made by Saul. Would they sell out their hero, as the Jerusalem crowd would later be turned against Jesus?

Vs. 10-12 – In the presence of the priest David inquired again as to how they should proceed. Note how David understood that it was Saul’s purpose to actually “*destroy the city for my sake*”, for their harbouring of David, in the same way that he had so mindlessly massacred the priests of Nob. The Lord affirmed both that Saul would come down and that the people of Keilah would not defend David. Even if they did defend him, it would only extend the civil war Saul was fostering.

23:13-29 – David in the Wilderness

Vs. 13 – David’s band of 400 men had now grown to 600, perhaps largely due to success against the

23:14 And David abode in the wilderness in strong holds, and remained in a mountain in the wilderness of Ziph. And Saul sought him every day, but God delivered him not into his hand.

23:15 And David saw that Saul was come out to seek his life: and David was in the wilderness of Ziph in a wood.

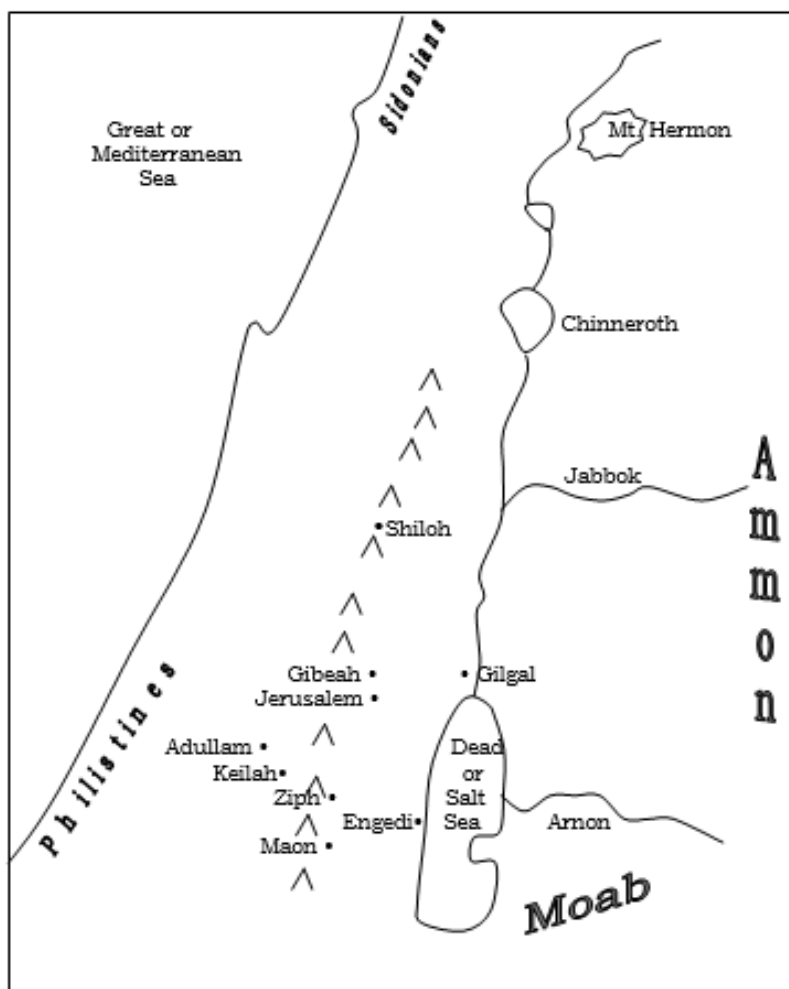
23:16 And Jonathan Saul's son arose, and went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hand in God.

Philistines, thus mentioned here. David fled from the city before Saul could even get himself organized to come, likely thinking mostly of the threat brought upon the people for his sake. With word of David's departure from the city to no certain location, Saul held off pursuit.

What a pleasure life in the city must have been for David and company, living like human beings in houses again, rather than in a cave. But alas, their pleasure was short-lived, and now it was back to life in the wilderness.

Vs. 14-15 – “*Saul sought him every day*” – Saul had begun actively searching for David by this time, and “*every day*”, as if such illegitimate work was Saul's only work. David did what he could, yet it was his God who “*delivered him not into his hand*”.

Vs. 16 – “*Jonathan...went to David into the wood*” – While Saul was beating the bushes in search of David, Jonathan knew where he was and went



directly to him. Could it be that even some among Saul’s “searchers” knew where David was but were not inclined to reveal such information? David’s friend came with encouraging words to lift his heart.

23:17 And he said unto him, Fear not: for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee; and thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee; and that also Saul my father knoweth.

23:18 And they two made a covenant before the LORD: and David abode in the wood, and Jonathan went to his house.

Jonathan was obviously not a part of Saul's search party, for he returned from this meeting to his house (vs. 18). He must have trekked some 50 kms from Gibeah through rugged terrain to see David again. It was in fact the last time they ever saw each other.

Vs. 17-18 – *“Fear not: for...thou shalt be king over Israel”* – Jonathan expressed again his confidence that David would live to become the next king of the land, even affirming his father's awareness of this eventuality as well. He presumed that David would replace his father upon his father's death, and that he would then remain as second in command. Again, their covenant of peace between them was reaffirmed (20:12-17). Theirs was a friendship like history has seldom seen.

In his self-denying humility and love for God and David, Jonathan was willing for a secondary role under David. In our self-denying humility and love for God and the Son of David, are we willing for the same? The crucial question ever before us is

23:19 Then came up the Ziphites to Saul to Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself with us in strong holds in the wood, in the hill of Hachilah, which is on the south of Jeshimon?

23:20 Now therefore, O king, come down according to all the desire of thy soul to come down; and our part shall be to deliver him into the king's hand.

23:21 And Saul said, Blessed be ye of the LORD; for ye have compassion on me.

whether we are happy with a secondary role, allowing Jesus all the glory as the exalted King of our life.

Vs. 19-20 – *“Then came up the Ziphites to Saul”* – Ziph was on the mountainous ridge running north-south through the heart of Palestine. It was south of Hebron and over 40 kms south of Jerusalem. To the east and north-east of Ziph are the chalky, barren, rugged foothills that slope down to the Dead Sea, known then as the Jeshimon or desert.

Some from Ziph took word to Saul of David's presence in their area. Their actions were likely borne out of fear, for Saul was still holding the stronger position and might even take action against those who could have helped him but did not. They offered themselves in a Judas type role, expressing their willingness to betray David to Saul when he came down. Compare the title of Psalm 54.

Vs. 21-24 – *“Blessed be ye of the LORD; for ye have compassion on me”* – Saul was delighted in the

- 23:22 *Go, I pray you, prepare yet, and know and see his place where his haunt is, and who hath seen him there: for it is told me that he dealeth very subtilly.*
- 23:23 *See therefore, and take knowledge of all the lurking places where he hideth himself, and come ye again to me with the certainty, and I will go with you: and it shall come to pass, if he be in the land, that I will search him out throughout all the thousands of Judah.*
- 23:24 *And they arose, and went to Ziph before Saul: but David and his men were in the wilderness of Maon, in the plain on the south of Jeshimon.*
- 23:25 *Saul also and his men went to seek him. And they told David; wherefore he came down into a rock, and abode in the wilderness of Maon. And when Saul heard that, he pursued after David in the wilderness of Maon.*
-

support, having received precious little of it from his people. The Ziphites were sent back commissioned to keep an eye on David and to learn his movements, hiding places, and associations. Saul wished to know who David was meeting with, little realizing that his own son was among those who had “*seen him there*”. They were to return to Saul when they had David’s movements plotted out and could lead their king to him. However, when they returned they discovered that David had already shifted to the area of Maon, 10 kms to the south.

Vs. 25-26 – When Saul came south in search of David there followed a cat and mouse chase among the rocks and ravines of the wilderness. It was one of the closest shaves David experienced, even coming to one critical point when only a mountaintop separated the two as they moved opposite each other. If ever there was a place where David might “*lie in wait*” to ambush Saul, that

23:26 And Saul went on this side of the mountain, and David and his men on that side of the mountain: and David made haste to get away for fear of Saul; for Saul and his men compassed David and his men round about to take them.
23:27 But there came a messenger unto Saul, saying, Haste thee, and come; for the Philistines have invaded the land.
23:28 Wherefore Saul returned from pursuing after David, and went against the Philistines: therefore they called that place Selahammahlekoth.

rugged wilderness was the ideal location, if there really was any kind of aggression in David's heart. Saul's men could see by David's actions the lie of Saul's words (22:8), just as Satan was made to see by Job's faithful actions the lie of his own accusations. Oh may the world see the same in us! May our actions display the lie of those who insist that Christians are hypocrites, that they use their religion to promote their own interests while claiming to be concerned for the interests of others.

Vs. 27-28 – *“But there came a messenger unto Saul”* – Though Saul had gotten very close by man's reckoning, he was never really close by God's reckoning. How easy it was for the Lord to bring a diversion, a more pressing issue to draw Saul and company away. Indeed the report sounded bad, like a full-on invasion by the Philistines! The Hebrew term behind *“invaded”* is literally “spread themselves”. So the report was that they were spread over the land like locusts. Therefore Saul could not overlook or even hesitate in responding to

the matter. Their coming was probably in retribution for their punishment received from David at Keilah. Yet the fact that Saul was soon back on David's trail (24:1) suggests that the calibre of the threat was somewhat less than the report indicated. Did the messenger, or the one who sent him, inflate the magnitude of the distracting threat out of concern for David's safety?

"Therefore they called that place Selahammahlekoth" – This mouthful of a name means "rock of divisions", marking the point when little more than a rock stood between Saul and David. Of course the term "rock" is often used in the Bible in a metaphorical sense referring to God as well. Indeed He was the Rock keeping those two companies of His people apart, just as He kept a division between attacking Egypt and escaping Israel through the pillar of cloud and fire (Ex. 14:19-20). It was the Lord showing His ability, by allowing it to get so close to an encounter that the place was named for its historical significance, and then so suddenly whisking the threat away.

Vs. 29 – *"David...dwelt in strong holds at Engedi"* –

24:1 And it came to pass, when Saul was returned from following the Philistines, that it was told him, saying, Behold, David is in the wilderness of Engedi.

24:2 Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and went to seek David and his men upon the rocks of the wild goats.

Engedi was due east of Ziph and Maon, down along the western shore of the Dead Sea. Again, it is very rugged country, much of it vertical, with many caves and ravines, narrow paths and steep cliffs. It was a place of “*strong holds*” where one could hole up and stand off an attacker. “*Engedi*” means “fountain of the wild goat”, suggesting the spring found there.

24:1-22 – Saul Spared at Engedi

Vs. 1 – Perhaps it was those of Ziph whom Saul had commissioned to keep an eye on David’s movements who now informed him of David’s current location. That Saul was back can only indicate an adequate success against whatever degree of invasion the Philistines had attempted.

Vs. 2 – Perhaps with the thought of greater speed, Saul cut his company of pursuers down to “*three thousand chosen men*”. If Saul did indeed think David would be the next king, as Jonathan suggested, he was sure determined to change his own mind! He was as determined to have David’s

24:3 And he came to the sheepcotes by the way, where was a cave; and Saul went in to cover his feet: and David and his men remained in the sides of the cave.

hide as the Philistines were to have his! That he chose his men “*out of all Israel*” may perhaps indicate that these were brought from farther afield, from among those less aware of David’s reputation for good character and heroism. There can be little doubt that Saul was dealing with a measure of reluctance among his men on this assignment.

“*Upon the rocks of the wild goats*” is a descriptive term relating the kind of terrain involved in that area.

Vs. 3 – “*Saul went in to cover his feet*” – They came to a place along the way where Saul entered a cave to “use the loo”, a euphemism we use for potty business. Their nice way of saying the same was to “cover the feet”, presumably referring to the articles of clothing dropped in the procedure. This obviously was a deep enough, dark enough cave for David and some of his men to be hiding in there without Saul even becoming aware. And obviously there was within the cave enough wind or water or bird sound to cover any noise of hiding, whispering men. The shoddy nature of Saul’s command becomes evident here. It would certainly be proper

24:4 And the men of David said unto him, Behold the day of which the LORD said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee. Then David arose, and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe privily.

that a few men quickly confirm the absence of any threat before letting their king so use such a cave, if only to ensure that there were no wild creatures of a four-legged kind within. After all, they were in enemy territory. Of course the result of it was that Saul inadvertently put himself right into the hands of his “enemy”. Again, if there was any truth to his lie of David’s aggressions, here was where it would surely be seen.

Vs. 4 – *“Behold the day of which the LORD said unto thee”* – Some there with David were quick to appreciate the greatest possible advantage so suddenly dropped right into their lap by this amazing turn of events. They were even quoting in David’s ear some unrecorded promise of just such an event. It sure looked like God’s hand. And indeed He was certainly involved in landing Saul in the very cave in which David hid, out of all the places Saul might have chosen to relieve himself! What else but that God was handing David the solution to his problem? And for a moment, and in a measure, David seemed to be convinced. Without further thought he crept from the darkness and

24:5 And it came to pass afterward, that David's heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt.

24:6 And he said unto his men, The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the LORD's anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD.

quietly, secretly cut an edge or tassel from the outer robe Saul had laid aside, all amazingly without Saul's awareness. Whether their whispers and movements were that stealthy, or perhaps the Lord momentarily took the edge off Saul's awareness, as He will later do on "*the hill of Hachilah*" (26:12), we are not told. But it is certain that Saul walked out of that cave without the least awareness that he had been observed and even touched.

Vs. 5 – "*David's heart smote him*" – David was a man unaccustomed to a troubled conscience, and his conscience was troubling him now. When sane thoughts caught up with him he realized that he had in fact violated the king, the Lord's anointed, if only in his thoughts. What a man does with a troubled conscience says a lot about the man and where his life is headed.

Vs. 6-7 – First David put his men straight on the matter. Regardless of the circumstances, if it was God who anointed and appointed the man then it is God who must remove him. David, being the leader

24:7 So David stayed his servants with these words, and suffered them not to rise against Saul. But Saul rose up out of the cave, and went on his way.

24:8 David also arose afterward, and went out of the cave, and cried after Saul, saying, My lord the king. And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed himself.

he was, what he had decided applied to his men without question as well. God forbid that proud man should presume to take God's responsibility upon himself. We find God's answer for euthanasia and abortion here. For death and life are to remain in the hands of their Author.

Vs. 8 – *“David...cried after Saul”* – David's men must have thought him out of his head as he left that cave on the run shouting after Saul! Having put his men straight, David must now put right where he had wronged, even though Saul did not even know that he had been wronged. Yet David knew, and his men knew. And tender-hearted David must put it right, though he risked all in doing so. What a terrible chance David took here in revealing himself! If this went bad it would be bad for all of his men in the cave as well. But it is as if David could only think of the need to put things right with Saul. How easy it would have been to think, “Hey, he certainly has not been treating *me* right, so why should I feel the need to treat him right?” Before his God, David felt the need! See how he was the very opposite of Saul.

24:9 And David said to Saul, Wherefore hearest thou men's words, saying, Behold, David seeketh thy hurt?

24:10 Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how that the LORD had delivered thee to day into mine hand in the cave: and some bade me kill thee: but mine eye spared thee; and I said, I will not put forth mine hand against my lord; for he is the LORD's anointed.

Where Saul would not bow to God in his desperate need to hold onto his life or image, David would risk his life in his desperate need to be right before God and man, even an evil, abusive man! This was a supreme act of trust in the Lord, for David knew his anointing and was placing himself completely in the Lord's hands as he placed his life in Saul's. It is the same trust of a woman who simply believes I Peter 3:1-6, or of a child believing Ephesians 6:1-3. In bowing himself to the ground before Saul David left himself fully exposed to Saul's will, whether for his life or his death.

Vs. 9 – *“Wherefore hearest thou men’s words?”* – David's main concern was that any should think him the aggressor. Actually Saul himself was the only one suggesting this and David probably knew it. But he presented it as if someone else was feeding Saul with such false information.

Vs. 10-11 – David's actions that day proved his desire to spare Saul rather than spear him. Even against strong suggestion he refused. Yet though

- 24:11 Moreover, my father, see, yea, see the skirt of thy robe in my hand: for in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe, and killed thee not, know thou and see that there is neither evil nor transgression in mine hand, and I have not sinned against thee; yet thou huntest my soul to take it.*
- 24:12 The LORD judge between me and thee, and the LORD avenge me of thee: but mine hand shall not be upon thee.*
- 24:13 As saith the proverb of the ancients, Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked: but mine hand shall not be upon thee.*
- 24:14 After whom is the king of Israel come out? after whom dost thou pursue? after a dead dog, after a flea.*
- 24:15 The LORD therefore be judge, and judge between me and thee, and see, and plead my cause, and deliver me out of thine hand.*
- 24:16 And it came to pass, when David had made an end of speaking these words unto Saul, that Saul said, Is this thy voice, my son David? And Saul lifted up his voice, and wept.*
-

he had never sinned against Saul he was being hunted by the king. David had good cause to scold this erring leader, yet he recognized Saul as his leader still, even as “*my lord, the king*”, and entreated him rather as a father (I Tim. 5:1).

Vs. 12-13 – “*The LORD judge between me and thee*” – Though David asked the Lord to avenge and judge fairly between them and deliver him from Saul (vs. 15), yet he resolved that he would not act against his king. By his quote of some ancient proverbial verse David seems to subtly suggest Saul’s wickedness.

Vs. 14 – “*After whom dost thou pursue?*” – In his humility David suggests a pursuit of one such as himself to be a worthless endeavour.

24:17 And he said to David, Thou art more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil.

24:18 And thou hast shewed this day how that thou hast dealt well with me: forasmuch as when the LORD had delivered me into thine hand, thou killedst me not.

24:19 For if a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away? wherefore the LORD reward thee good for that thou hast done unto me this day.

Vs. 16 – *“Is this thy voice, my son David?”* – Perhaps David inwardly cringed as his words came to an end, wondering which way Saul would turn in his response. By God’s grace it turned to David’s good. Saul had descended to become such a pathetic case, to position without character, while David was all courage and character without position. By his question Saul seems to refer more to David’s attitude than his actual voice. *“Is this what you are saying or thinking?”* Perhaps Saul had half-way convinced himself of David’s evil intent, and the realization of what David was actually feeling now finally broke through the tangled web of Saul’s twisted inward perceptions.

Vs. 17-18 – *“Thou art more righteous than I”* – Saul was making admissions now of his unrighteous treatment of David, in contrast to David’s gracious handling of him. Whether these words were heard by any but Saul and David is not given. At least some of David’s men must have heard.

Vs. 19 – *“Wherefore the LORD reward thee good”* –

24:20 And now, behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thine hand.

24:21 Swear now therefore unto me by the LORD, that thou wilt not cut off my seed after me, and that thou wilt not destroy my name out of my father's house.

24:22 And David sware unto Saul. And Saul went home; but David and his men gat them up unto the hold.

Saul actually wished the Lord's blessing upon David for showing him grace he himself would not have shown. It could only be that David did not consider Saul his enemy. That this was a revelation to Saul displays how very bad he had made David out to be in his own mind. Again, beware of those mind games in concluding others to be what they are not.

Vs. 20 – *“I know well that thou shalt surely be king”* – This is a critical point in this chapter. Here now was the supreme admission that swept the foundation from under all of Saul's grand endeavours against David's life. He at last said it, that he stood with his son in his awareness of David's right to reign. It was a crucial admission, putting the king's own royal stamp on David, that he was no usurper, seizing a throne that was not rightly his, but that it was a right acknowledged here by Saul himself. And if this was before others, it was an uncharacteristic death to self for Saul.

Vs. 21-22 – *“Swear now therefore unto me by the LORD”* – As Jonathan, Saul wanted only David's

word of protection for his heirs and ancestors, which David was happy to give (a promise he did indeed keep, II Sam. 21:7), for he had already vowed the same to Jonathan (20:15).

It was a good day indeed for David, full of hope and promise, though not yet with the most complete assurances. Nothing was certain with Saul! He had proven himself a most unstable soul and not to be trusted. But this was the farthest he had ever come in a kind of repentance, and in acknowledging David's right to the throne. David's hopes must certainly have soared! Yet still they did not return to civilization where they could be easily located, but returned instead to some wilderness stronghold.

“... my lord fighteth
the battles of the LORD,
and evil hath not been found in thee
all thy days.

Yet a man is risen to pursue thee,
and to seek thy soul:
but the soul of my lord shall be
bound in the bundle of life
with the LORD thy God”

(1 Sam. 25:28-29)

Class 17 – I Samuel 25

25:1 *And Samuel died; and all the Israelites were gathered together, and lamented him, and buried him in his house at Ramah. And David arose, and went down to the wilderness of Paran.*

25:2 *And there was a man in Maon, whose possessions were in Carmel; and the man was very great, and he had three thousand sheep, and a thousand goats: and he was shearing his sheep in Carmel.*

25:1-13 – Nabal’s Rebuff

Vs. 1 – “*And Samuel died*” – When a good and godly man dies all recognize the loss in some measure. Such was the high regard for Samuel among his people. Though they did not always like what he had to say, he certainly held the respect of all. He was a man who lived for God and the good of his people from beginning to end. Do we ever hear of any sin in Samuel? What a consistent life he lived through some of the most troubled times in Israel’s history. Compare godly Noah in his day (Gen. 6).

“*David...went down to the wilderness of Paran*” – The wilderness of Paran was south of Judah in the northern Sinai region. The mention of David’s move at this point may indicate his temporary retreat there in grieving the loss of Samuel and perhaps fearing the effects this loss might bring.

Vs. 2 – Nabal was a wealthy man who lived in Maon,

25:3 *Now the name of the man was Nabal; and the name of his wife Abigail: and she was a woman of good understanding, and of a beautiful countenance: but the man was churlish and evil in his doings; and he was of the house of Caleb.*
25:4 *And David heard in the wilderness that Nabal did shear his sheep.*
25:5 *And David sent out ten young men, and David said unto the young men, Get you up to Carmel, and go to Nabal, and greet him in my name:*

with his fields and business in the area of Carmel a couple kilometres to the north.

“He was shearing his sheep in Carmel” – David, being a shepherd, understood the joy of the sheep shearing time. Like the harvest and threshing season, it was that time when all the work finally showed its profits. It was a happy, festive occasion with income in hand and joy in the heart.

Vs. 3 – Abigail was a rare gem, exceptional in both wisdom and beauty, while her husband Nabal was quite an opposite spirit, being both *“evil and churlish in his doings”*. The word in the Hebrew behind *“churlish”* means “hard” or “difficult”. Nabal was not an easy man to speak to or to get along with.

Vs. 4-5 – Being a joyous occasion when men are given to feasting and generosity, David was not ashamed to ask for help, while trusting God for his keeping.

25:6 *And thus shall ye say to him that liveth in prosperity, Peace be both to thee, and peace be to thine house, and peace be unto all that thou hast.*

25:7 *And now I have heard that thou hast shearers: now thy shepherds which were with us, we hurt them not, neither was there ought missing unto them, all the while they were in Carmel.*

“Greet him in my name” – David was known as their national hero and protector. It was partly because of him that folks enjoyed the freedom to prosper and keep their wealth. Compare times when oppressors stripped the people of their wealth (23:1; Judges 6:2-6).

Vs. 6-9 – *“Peace...peace...peace”* – Their greeting of peace was a reminder of the peace Nabal enjoyed because of David’s protecting presence.

“Neither was there ought missing unto them” – It was not only that David’s company took nothing, but that there were none of the usual losses to thieves from the wilderness areas due to David’s presence. So a percentage of those sheep still in Nabal’s hands were due to the work of David and his men.

In Keilah David recovered lost spoils (chapter 23), while in Carmel he prevented their loss.

“Thou hast shearers” – The phrase suggests hired professional shearers. As today, these were

25:8 Ask thy young men, and they will shew thee. Wherefore let the young men find favour in thine eyes: for we come in a good day: give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to thine hand unto thy servants, and to thy son David.

25:9 And when David's young men came, they spake to Nabal according to all those words in the name of David, and ceased.

perhaps men especially skilled at shearing who travelled about from place to place as they were called in for their services.

“Ask thy young men, and they will show thee” – Nabal’s own shepherds would readily confirm the benefit of David’s presence in the area (vs. 15-16). So they had *“come in a good day”* of joy in profits hoping for a measure of generosity for their part in making that good increase happen. It was more than merely a bald request for charity, for again they had positively benefited Nabal. It was much like the car guard who offers a service for which you did not ask, yet his presence actually does help in keeping your possessions. It seems apparent that this was no actual contracted job, but a volunteered service. Yet David, being a shepherd, understood the dangers of predators of many kinds (lion and bear). Thieves or rustlers would always be a concern as well (Jn. 10). He knew by his own experience the value of the help he provided. So David’s men spoke as he had told them and *“ceased”*, waiting for Nabal’s reply.

25:10 And Nabal answered David's servants, and said, Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse? there be many servants now a days that break away every man from his master.
25:11 Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men, whom I know not whence they be?
25:12 So David's young men turned their way, and went again, and came and told him all those sayings.
25:13 And David said unto his men, Gird ye on every man his sword. And they girded on every man his sword; and David also girded on his sword: and there went up after David about four hundred men; and two hundred abode by the stuff.

Vs. 10-11 – Nabal’s reply was belligerent. He implied he did not even know David’s name or anything of his followers. He suggested David merely a common rebel. He flatly refused any help from his possessions (“*my...my...my*”), sounding much like the rich fool of Christ’s parable (Lk. 12), not honouring God with his increase. It seems Nabal felt David provided a service he did not need or want. Perhaps fear of Saul moved Nabal, for the king had shown himself deadly serious about none offering help to David when he made a graveyard of Nob. Perhaps Nabal was simply pro Saul. Due to his location in the south it would likely be that Nabal’s greatest troubles had been from the Amalekites to the south of him, which problem Saul had quite happily solved (chapter 15). Remember that Saul had even erected some type of monument standing there in Carmel in remembrance of their success against that southern menace (15:12).

Vs. 12-13 – “*Gird ye on every man his sword*” – To

come in one's name is as if he himself came. For David's messengers to come in his name and be handled in such a manner was as if David himself were so handled. Even so it is with God's messengers coming in His name.

Now David showed a nasty streak of temper, being so highly offended perhaps more for Nabal's rough words than the refused help. He responded this way in the heat of his rage and without sufficient thought, and only because he had the power to do so with his small army gathered around him. Thus in a measure it was an abuse of the power God had given to him. When Jesus was in the wilderness (same area?) Satan tempted Him to abuse His power as well, in suggesting He turn stones to bread in His hunger (Matt. 4:1-4). David would misuse his God-given power to turn stony Nabal into an unwilling source of bread.

For the first time David fell from a role of *protector* of his people to *aggressor*. Had he actually followed through and attacked he would have given Saul valid cause to pursue him, and he would have put the first blot upon his otherwise clean reputation as rescuer, rather than renegade or rebel. How much he would have lost in the eyes of his people! The true test and demonstration that one's purposes are

25:14 But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, saying, Behold, David sent messengers out of the wilderness to salute our master; and he railed on them.

truly good is to *continue* being good even when handled badly or considered to be bad. Had David been allowed to go in that direction here, how easy it would have been to continue along that downward way. This was likely a more crucial moment in David's life than we may at first realize. *Praise God* there was somebody with wisdom to stand in his way at that key juncture, to keep him from such a turning! Praise God for His servants who are willing to be there to stand and say what needs saying at such times, a godly father or mother, a pastor or friend, showing himself a true friend. Nathan would later provide the same service for David (II Sam. 12).

25:14-35 – Abigail's Rescue

The responses of both David and Abigail indicate Nabal's rebuff was against the established customs of that day and place.

Vs. 14 – *“One of the young men told Abigail”* – Obviously Abigail was well known for her wisdom among the servants, and her influence was significant enough for this one to so quickly take the report to her of what happened. They were facing

25:15 But the men were very good unto us, and we were not hurt, neither missed we any thing, as long as we were conversant with them, when we were in the fields:

25:16 They were a wall unto us both by night and day, all the while we were with them keeping the sheep.

danger and she was the one with the level head to know what to do. Perhaps she had covered for her husband's ratty responses prior to this. This shepherd's words were not slander at this point, but a simple report of what had taken place. Apparently Abigail understood that the purpose of David's messengers involved more than just a greeting or salutation but a fair request for food.

"He railed on them" – The Hebrew word behind the English suggests Nabal "screamed" at them or "flew upon" them. The same verb is behind the phrase in 15:19, *"thou...didst fly upon the spoil"*. Nabal's attitude was more aggressive than his words in vs. 10-11 imply.

Vs. 15-16 – *"But the men were very good unto us"* – The shepherd's report on the conduct of David and company was all positive. They were never abused by them while out in the fields with the sheep and nothing ever went missing from their camp or flocks. Quite the opposite in fact. David's band provided Nabal's shepherds with the very finest security from the normal troubles they were

25:17 Now therefore know and consider what thou wilt do; for evil is determined against our master, and against all his household: for he is such a son of Belial, that a man cannot speak to him.

accustomed to facing out in the field. Though at first Nabal's shepherds might have been apprehensive about so large a group of fugitives so near to them, they soon discovered they need not fear them, or anything else with them near. They could sleep at night! Though Nabal might not choose to provide David with help, he was not wise to handle him with such contempt, one who had only served his best interests and put money in his pocket.

Vs. 17 – *“Evil is determined against our master”* – Perhaps knowing David or knowing the custom of the day this man feared retaliation, and he was looking to Abigail to know what to do in undoing her husband's folly. She was one who would listen, whereas Nabal did not excel in this area. At this point the shepherd fell to slander, suggesting his master worthless (*“son of Belial”*) and a man none could speak to and hope that he would listen.

The name “Nabal” means “fool”, but particularly in the sense of one insensitive and unwilling to listen to reason. It is a word used several times in Psalms

25:18 Then Abigail made haste, and took two hundred loaves, and two bottles of wine, and five sheep ready dressed, and five measures of parched corn, and an hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs, and laid them on asses.
25:19 And she said unto her servants, Go on before me; behold, I come after you. But she told not her husband Nabal.

and Proverbs. This is “*the fool*” that “*hath said in his heart, There is no God*” (Ps. 14:1; 53:1). Proverbs expresses the unfortunate situation when a good ability to speak is found in such a fool (Prov. 17:7), and how the parent of such a one “*hath no joy*” (17:21). In fact, one on a list of unbearable things on earth is such a “*fool when he is filled with meat*” (30:22), for wealth combines to make this type arrogant and even more beyond reason. It is an interesting handle for parents to place on a child. Prophetic? Or is a man’s name involved in the making of the man?

We might ask why wise Abigail would marry such a difficult man. But we must remember that she likely had little choice in the matter in that society. It would seem the choice of her parents in her marriage had more to do with Nabal’s ability to provide for his wife than his gracious character.

Vs. 18-20 – “*Then Abigail made haste*” – Abigail was a woman of action and understood immediately the need for speed (vs. 23). Without informing her

25:20 *And it was so, as she rode on the ass, that she came down by the covert on the hill, and, behold, David and his men came down against her; and she met them.*

25:21 *Now David had said, Surely in vain have I kept all that this fellow hath in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that pertained unto him: and he hath requited me evil for good.*

25:22 *So and more also do God unto the enemies of David, if I leave of all that pertain to him by the morning light any that pisseth against the wall.*

husband, likely for fear that he might stop her, she sent some of the servants on ahead of her to meet David and inform him of her purpose, while she as quickly as possible prepared a liberal gift of food for him. She raided their store of food goods, of which they must have kept an ample supply, and quickly loaded several donkeys with things both nourishing and tasty. The “*bottles*” of wine would have been large goat skin bladders. She then mounted a donkey and led her pack animals, seeking to intercept David.

Vs. 21-22 – “*Surely in vain have I kept all that this fellow hath*” – The scene now shifts back to David and his angry thoughts, expressing the purpose of his heart. It was not only that David felt they deserved to be paid a measure of good for their good, but that they did not deserve be to paid evil for their good. And so David had fully resolved to wipe out Nabal’s entire household. It was a spiteful decision, raising the fair question of why such overkill for the fault of one man.

25:23 *And when Abigail saw David, she hasted, and lighted off the ass, and fell before David on her face, and bowed herself to the ground,*

“Any that pisseth against the wall” – In days gone by this nasty little KJV term did not have such an offensive feel on our tongue as it has come to carry in our day. The phrase as a whole was a harsh way of referring to a young boy. David resolved in his heart to kill all the men, the whole lot, right down to the boys. It was clearly a wrong response! Perhaps David was beginning to struggle under the pressures of life on the run and in the wilderness. But such a violent response would put him into the same category as the one who pursued his life!

Vs. 23 – *“She hasted and lighted off the ass”* – Again we see Abigail’s haste in leaving her donkey and bowing before David. Such an expression of humility would have reminded David of how he himself had recently done the same before Saul at the Engedi cave. His heart would surely have been drawn out by such an action, for though angry at that moment there remained in him the same humility he now witnessed in Abigail. I suspect she went a long way right there on the ground in gaining David’s ear and heart.

Vs. 24 – *“Upon me, my lord, upon me let this iniquity*

25:24 And fell at his feet, and said, Upon me, my lord, upon me let this iniquity be: and let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak in thine audience, and hear the words of thine handmaid.
25:25 Let not my lord, I pray thee, regard this man of Belial, even Nabal: for as his name is, so is he; Nabal is his name, and folly is with him: but I thine handmaid saw not the young men of my lord, whom thou didst send.

be” – She pled with David that he might allow her to bear the fault for her husband’s wrong, even as Jesus pleads with the Father that He might do the same for us, we who were as much insensitive fools before God as Nabal. She pled for the freedom to speak with him for a moment before he proceeded according to his purpose. And as she began to speak we discover the “*good understanding*” resident in this woman, for her speech, so hastily composed, was a first-class work of art!

Vs. 25 – “*Let not my lord, I pray thee, regard this man of Belial*” – She begged that David might please disregard Nabal’s unkindness, openly acknowledging the truth of what Nabal was. In short, he was a man who lived down to his name. Again, it would seem that her words, as the shepherd’s, were slanderous, and yet it was in an effort to save her husband’s life that she spoke. Such harsh words against Nabal were probably not necessary in her approach here. But it may be that she was provoked as well that she must so bail her husband out (again?). She held herself up as the

25:26 Now therefore, my lord, as the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, seeing the LORD hath withholden thee from coming to shed blood, and from avenging thyself with thine own hand, now let thine enemies, and they that seek evil to my lord, be as Nabal.

25:27 And now this blessing which thine handmaid hath brought unto my lord, let it even be given unto the young men that follow my lord.

one who should rather have received David's request. It would seem this was a true statement, yet it could come across a bit self-important.

Vs. 26 – “*Let thine enemies...be as Nabal*” – This was perhaps subtly aimed at Saul, and even likely hinting at what David himself might become should he follow through on his vengeful purpose. Saul had shown himself the same calibre of a man as foolish Nabal to make himself David's enemy without sufficient cause. And now, in that the Lord had allowed her to intercept him, David was presented with the opportunity to rise above such men and manners, to show himself the bigger man, of nobler character. Her words were astute, whether by her own awareness and wisdom or according to what was given to her by God in that moment, or a bit of both. For to not avenge himself with his own hand was the very choice David had so recently made with Saul in the cave. Did she know about this?

Vs. 27 – She offered to him the “*blessing*” of the food

25:28 I pray thee, forgive the trespass of thine handmaid: for the LORD will certainly make my lord a sure house; because my lord fighteth the battles of the LORD, and evil hath not been found in thee all thy days.

she had brought, as all that David had been looking for in the first place, and more. So he was not denied his original request, and therefore he now had no reason but his own wounded pride to carry on with his purpose.

Vs. 28 – *“I pray thee, forgive the trespass of thine handmaid”* – Again she made the fault her own and begged David’s forgiveness as if she herself had offended him. But then she really got up close with her words. For it was the supreme encouragement of her words of confidence in him that likely swung David’s attitude and won his heart. Abigail was a truly thoughtful woman. Somehow she was fully aware of God’s dealings with David. She, as faithful Jonathan, knew that he would to be king and that his throne would be established. She expressed her confidence that it was the Lord’s battles and according to the Lord’s way that David had been fighting. What a shame it would be to mar his good reputation! She was fully aware that David’s way had always been with pure motives, up to that point. Again, what a shame to mess this up over a man so woefully unworthy of David’s time or trouble

- 25:29 *Yet a man is risen to pursue thee, and to seek thy soul: but the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the LORD thy God; and the souls of thine enemies, them shall he sling out, as out of the middle of a sling.*
- 25:30 *And it shall come to pass, when the LORD shall have done to my lord according to all the good that he hath spoken concerning thee, and shall have appointed thee ruler over Israel;*
- 25:31 *That this shall be no grief unto thee, nor offence of heart unto my lord, either that thou hast shed blood causeless, or that my lord hath avenged himself: but when the LORD shall have dealt well with my lord, then remember thine handmaid.*
-

such as Nabal.

Vs. 29 – “*Yet a man is risen to pursue thee*” – Without mentioning names she expressed her awareness of Saul’s unjust pursuit of David, yet with her fullest confidence that David would be protected in the Lord’s hand as one might bind his most precious things in order to keep them close and safe. She was fully expecting that all who opposed David would ultimately be cast out as one might sling a stone from a sling. Clever lady indeed! Hey she was using her head! It was an illustration with which David could most certainly identify, a reminder of the way God had first launched him to fame against Goliath.

Vs. 30-31 – Notice that there was not in her words any question of “if”, only of “*when the LORD shall have*” accomplished His purpose for David in establishing his throne over Israel. And in that day what a gnawing pang in his heart and stain on his

record if he should needlessly shed blood now. If David was willing to let his reputation tumble, *Abigail was not!* Where he had served *them* as the protector of their possessions, she would serve *him* as the protector of his good name, and of his conscience. She was a wise one to not make it a matter of mercy for her sake, but a matter of David's own good. She was wise to point him to the future and remind him that this too would pass and another day was coming. It is the very basis of all Christian patience. We are not wise to forget who and what we are in Jesus Christ, and to vent our spleen on one who stirs our ire on the moment. In that coming day of *our* rewards and reign with Him we too will be so glad we chose to heed Abigail's good counsel, to rather respond with tolerance of the intolerable. For we too face fools in this life, boorish brutes who might just as well not have ears.

If anything, Abigail gave a face to that faceless people of Nabal's household, whom David would have so lightly destroyed. And David perhaps realized with a jolt that such a woman of excellence would have died as well through his murderous purpose. Compare those beautiful, proverbial scenes of "*apples of gold in pictures of silver*" and "*an earring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold*", describing the fitly spoken words of "*a wise reprov-er*"

25:32 And David said to Abigail, Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me:

25:33 And blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand.

25:34 For in very deed, as the LORD God of Israel liveth, which hath kept me back from hurting thee, except thou hadst hasted and come to meet me, surely there had not been left unto Nabal by the morning light any that pisseth against the wall.

25:35 So David received of her hand that which she had brought him, and said unto her, Go up in peace to thine house; see, I have hearkened to thy voice, and have accepted thy person.

upon an obedient ear” (Prov. 25:11-12; 15:23).

Vs. 32-33 – *“Blessed be the LORD God of Israel”* – David was impressed! Impressed that it was the God of grace using this woman to stop him that day from madly rushing into something he would surely regret. He praised God for His intervention! And he praised Abigail for her shrewd and sensible counsel, for allowing the Lord to use her in keeping him from folly. Being a man of humility, David was willing to acknowledge sound wisdom, even from a woman. So it was not so much David keeping himself a good man that day, but the Lord serving as the Keeper of his character, through the surprising vehicle of wise Abigail.

Vs. 34-35 – David acknowledged before Abigail that his headlong purpose had been to wipe out their entire household. And he openly acknowledged that it was only her haste in getting to him in time that saved them; saved not only them but David as well,

25:36 And Abigail came to Nabal; and, behold, he held a feast in his house, like the feast of a king; and Nabal's heart was merry within him, for he was very drunken: wherefore she told him nothing, less or more, until the morning light.

25:37 But it came to pass in the morning, when the wine was gone out of Nabal, and his wife had told him these things, that his heart died within him, and he became as a stone.

25:38 And it came to pass about ten days after, that the LORD smote Nabal, that he died.

from the vengeful, murderous thing he would have done and become in such an act. He left Abigail with his assurance that she could return home in peace, that he would most certainly heed her sound advice.

25:36-44 – Abigail Becomes David’s Wife

Vs. 36 – Abigail returned home to discover Nabal holding a feast and drinking himself drunk in his house with extravagance comparable to a king, likely with joy in celebration for the great bales of wool in his barn and the handsome price they would bring. The man was absolutely oblivious! While his wife was out desperately saving their lives from the results of her husband’s sharp, offensive tongue, he was having a grand old time with friends! She wished to tell him what had happened, but she did not prefer to talk to booze. So she waited until the morning.

Vs. 37-38 – “*His heart died within him*” – She explained the next morning to her hung-over

25:39 *And when David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, Blessed be the LORD, that hath pleaded the cause of my reproach from the hand of Nabal, and hath kept his servant from evil; for the LORD hath returned the wickedness of Nabal upon his own head. And David sent and communed with Abigail, to take her to him to wife.*

husband how very close to massacre they had all come the day before. The response in Nabal was stunning. It was like when a telephone line suddenly goes dead, and then a few seconds later the dial tone rings confirming the call cut off. Something inside Nabal just suddenly went blank in that moment (stroke or heart attack perhaps?), and 10 days later the man was dead! It was the Lord sweeping away the life of an obnoxious man who had abused His anointed. So as it turns out David did not even need to lift his hand against Nabal.

Even so the day comes when the Lord will bring His vengeance upon all who refuse or abuse His Anointed One, Jesus Christ, sweeping them away to an eternal hell.

“The wicked...shall gnash with their teeth and melt away” (Ps. 112:10).

Vs. 39 – *“Blessed be the LORD, that hath pleaded the cause of my reproach”* – David saw Nabal’s death as the answer of his God in his behalf and the repayment of Nabal for his evil. David was still blessing the Lord for keeping him from vengeance

25:40 And when the servants of David were come to Abigail to Carmel, they spake unto her, saying, David sent us unto thee, to take thee to him to wife.
25:41 And she arose, and bowed herself on her face to the earth, and said, Behold, let thine handmaid be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord.
25:42 And Abigail hasted, and arose and rode upon an ass, with five damsels of hers that went after her; and she went after the messengers of David, and became his wife.

and probably did for the rest of his days on earth. By his wise choice to hold himself back he allowed the Lord to step in and adequately respond in His own way and time. *“Vengeance is Mine; I will repay saith the LORD”*. It was the Lord affirming David’s innocence and Nabal’s wrong. Compare David’s response here with Proverbs 24:17-18.

“David sent and communed with Abigail” – After an appropriate time of mourning David approached Abigail about the possibility of becoming his wife, which offer she was quick to accept. How suddenly her situation improved, because she, with David, was willing to wait upon the Lord to act in her behalf in His own good time. She served and protected even an evil husband, and in time the Lord gave her something better and made it right.

Vs. 40-42 – Again Abigail’s humility is evident in her readiness to bow and serve. And again we see the woman of action that she was. It is the 3rd time the word *“haste”* is used of her in this chapter (vs. 18, 23). Compare Rebekah (Gen. 24:15-20). *“Haste”*

*25:43 David also took Ahinoam of Jezreel; and they were also both of them his wives.
25:44 But Saul had given Michal his daughter, David's wife, to Phalti the son of Laish,
which was of Gallim.*

seems to be characteristic of their marriage as well. We are given the impression of no or little courtship, only a knowing from both sides that it was right. Could there perhaps have been a measure of mutual convenience involved, as well as respect and love? For Abigail to wait too long might leave her open to her father marrying her off to another fool, and David could sorely use a source of supply for those difficult days of their wilderness wanderings?

Vs. 43-44 – With word of Saul giving his daughter Michal, David's first wife, to another man, it is understandable that David would grab a gem like Abigail. But why this 3rd wife, Ahinoam? Why the need to multiply wives when such never provided a happy home life? Compare the sad situations with Abraham, Jacob, and Elkanah. Compare multiple wives forbidden for a king in Deuteronomy 17:17.

Class 18 – I Samuel 26-27

26:1 And the Ziphites came unto Saul to Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself in the hill of Hachilah, which is before Jeshimon?

26:2 Then Saul arose, and went down to the wilderness of Ziph, having three thousand chosen men of Israel with him, to seek David in the wilderness of Ziph.

26:1-25 – Saul Spared at Hachilah

Vs. 1 – “*And the Ziphites came unto Saul*” – These tattling Ziphites are an interesting consideration. Yet perhaps they could not really be faulted. It seems they did not know Saul had relented and given David his blessing at Engedi. Why did Saul not confirm his decision with some sort of public notice, as the letter King Nebuchadnezzar sent throughout his empire in Daniel 4 to explain his change of heart? Unless Saul’s decision was not really confirmed in his own heart? The last these Ziphites heard, they were to watch and report on David’s movements. So they were simply obeying their king.

Vs. 2 – “*Then Saul arose...to seek David*” – This can only be explained by a kind of irrational insanity to which Saul had fallen. This change of heart suggests that perhaps Saul’s men did not hear his words at Engedi, or that he just did not care that

26:3 And Saul pitched in the hill of Hachilah, which is before Jeshimon, by the way. But David abode in the wilderness, and he saw that Saul came after him into the wilderness.
26:4 David therefore sent out spies, and understood that Saul was come in very deed.
26:5 And David arose, and came to the place where Saul had pitched: and David beheld the place where Saul lay, and Abner the son of Ner, the captain of his host: and Saul lay in the trench, and the people pitched round about him.

they did. And it suggests that Saul was not sincere in his words there at the cave either, though it sounded sincere. Could it be that because he had refused repentance for so long, by this time it was *impossible* for him to truly repent? Here was “*a double minded man*” if ever there was one, “*unstable in all his ways*” (James 1:8).

Vs. 3-4 – “*He saw that Saul came after him*” – When David heard, he sent spies to confirm “*that Saul was come in very deed*”. He probably just could not believe it!

Vs. 5 – “*David arose, and came to the place where Saul had pitched*” – They crept up close to a position where they could see the layout of Saul’s camp, apparently while still light. The king slept in a protected place with all his men bedded down around him. The Hebrew word behind “*trench*” (KJV) comes of a word meaning wagon or cart. It seems they formed a protective circle with their wagons and baggage around the place where Saul slept. Abner, the captain of the army, was there, he

26:6 *Then answered David and said to Ahimelech the Hittite, and to Abishai the son of Zeruiah, brother to Joab, saying, Who will go down with me to Saul to the camp? And Abishai said, I will go down with thee.*

mentioned here because he will feature later.

Vs. 6 – “*Who will go down with me to Saul?*” – David asked in the hearing of two of his men who was willing to join him in paying Saul a bedside visit, and Abishai’s hand was up in a moment. It would be a bold and risky action, requiring a lot of nerve, the stuff of legends and fearless heroes. It was a bit like when David met Goliath’s challenge, a touch of reckless impulsiveness perhaps. Yet David was right with God and without fear again now, and it really looks good on him! As at Engedi, he was fully placing himself in the Lord’s hands to protect him while crawling into that camp.

Abishai is an interesting study as well. He was the son of David’s sister, brother to Joab and Asahel (II Sam. 2:18). Abishai featured prominently in David’s wars, later becoming 2nd in command under Joab in leading David’s army (II Sam. 10:10; 18:2). On one occasion Abishai killed another Philistine giant who thought he saw a chance to take David’s life when the king was getting older (II Sam. 21:17). He was later named as “*the chief among three*” and

26:7 So David and Abishai came to the people by night: and, behold, Saul lay sleeping within the trench, and his spear stuck in the ground at his bolster: but Abner and the people lay round about him.

26:8 Then said Abishai to David, God hath delivered thine enemy into thine hand this day: now therefore let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear even to the earth at once, and I will not smite him the second time.

the “*most honourable*” of the three warrior brothers in David’s roll of mighty men (II Sam. 23:18-19).

Vs. 7 – Obviously all in Saul’s camp slept with confidence for they posted no watchmen. It is an interesting point. Confidence in what? Their greater numbers? The known fact that David was not an aggressor? Their lack of concern likely expresses the common sentiment among them all, Saul included, that David was not to be feared. And so David and Abishai carefully crept or crawled right into the middle of their camp without being detected! The word “*bolster*” (KJV) refers to a pillow or cushion of some type.

Vs. 8 – “*Now therefore let me smite him*” – Abishai was a fiery, fearless young man, though perhaps a bit thoughtless. How did he think they were going to get out of the midst of that camp after the commotion of killing Saul? As in the Engedi cave they were whispering in the darkness beside sleeping Saul. Again the suggestion was made that God had placed Saul at David’s disposal. “Please let

me quickly peg him to the ground with his own spear. It will only take one well-placed strike.” Abishai’s wish was understandable, for Saul had made himself a mess, a menace, a monster, as if an oppressive weight over the whole nation. Both sides would breathe a sigh of relief were Saul put out of their misery.

See how Abishai’s suggestion had many indications of being a right course, but it still was not right. How many an unhappy child of God has come to suffering because he/she made a grab for something that seemed right in many ways, but they knew in their heart that it was not God’s perfect will and therefore was not entirely right. And they were later so sorry they did not wait for His perfect time. Oh beware of that voice in your ear encouraging you against godly patience. David’s decision had been made and made ahead of time, *before* the heat of the crisis. *He would do right!* He would wait on God, though it would mean many years of wilderness living. But when at last the time came, it was right, and the right time, and so David had the support of his entire community. This is an important factor as well. Compare Boaz wisely unwilling to proceed with Ruth’s marriage proposal until he had the support of the nearer kinsman and of his community (Ruth 4).

26:9 *And David said to Abishai, Destroy him not: for who can stretch forth his hand against the LORD's anointed, and be guiltless?*

26:10 *David said furthermore, As the LORD liveth, the LORD shall smite him; or his day shall come to die; or he shall descend into battle, and perish.*

Vs. 9 – “*Destroy him not*” – There was no hesitation in David this time, for he knew his own mind now. Unlike Saul, who was moved against his own stated purpose by the Ziphite suggestion, David had made his decision and would not be moved. He had given his word to Saul, saying “*I will not put forth mine hand against my lord*” (24:10) and he would stand by it. He would not succumb to situation ethics. Though the circumstance seemed to suggest an opportunity from God, David now understood that God would not lead him to a wrong. At all cost he would have the Lord’s best. And how he was blessed by God in time for this wise decision!

Vs. 10 – “*The LORD shall smite him*” – David had resolved to leave Saul’s end in the Lord’s hands. God so quickly dealing with Nabal had very likely helped to confirm this in his mind. David’s faith was operating here. He knew he did not need to step in and help the God who does not need the arm of flesh. There was patience in him now to wait on God for His purpose and timing. N.B. how David made the right decision at Engedi and the Lord then confirmed that decision with Nabal. The Lord steps

26:11 The LORD forbid that I should stretch forth mine hand against the LORD's anointed: but, I pray thee, take thou now the spear that is at his bolster, and the cruse of water, and let us go.

26:12 So David took the spear and the cruse of water from Saul's bolster; and they gat them away, and no man saw it, nor knew it, neither awaked: for they were all asleep; because a deep sleep from the LORD was fallen upon them.

in to highlight our right decisions, even as He steps in to harden with our wrong decisions.

Vs. 11 – *“Take thou now the spear that is at his bolster”* – It seems it was David’s purpose from the start to collect something from Saul’s side. In the previous situation at Engedi it was Saul’s heart David was after in revealing himself. Here he was now going for the hearts of Saul’s *men*. None could help but to be impressed with the gutsy daring of the man, as well as his gracious honour in dealing with the king. And all would see and understand without a doubt that David could not be *“lying in wait”* for Saul.

Was David’s manoeuvre perhaps a bit too daring? An unnecessary risk? Shades of Satan’s temptation of Christ to jump from the temple, assuring Him that the angels would surely catch Him?

Vs. 12 – *“A deep sleep from the LORD was fallen upon them”* – God had come alongside to help. Perhaps this revelation was a bit of a

26:13 Then David went over to the other side, and stood on the top of an hill afar off; a great space being between them:

26:14 And David cried to the people, and to Abner the son of Ner, saying, Answerest thou not, Abner? Then Abner answered and said, Who art thou that criest to the king?

disappointment? These two were probably slapping each other on the back for their first-class job of so effectively crawling through that camp. But again we see the principle that with our choice to do right the Lord affirms us in it.

Vs. 13 – There is a touch of emphasis on the distance here. While David would endanger *himself* in creeping into their camp, he would not put his followers in harm's way in revealing their presence. Perhaps he had recognized how he risked the lives of his men at Engedi and was determined not to do it again. Saul was camped on "*the hill of Hachilah*" and David and company went across to another hill, near enough to hear shouted words in the quiet of the night but far enough to easily escape if Saul chose to pursue.

Vs. 14 – "*And David cried to the people*" – Suddenly Saul's camp was awakened with a voice out of the night. David did not direct his words at Saul. Again, this was for "*the people*" to hear of David's true nature and attitude toward the king. There had been a serious breach of security, and so David

26:15 And David said to Abner, Art not thou a valiant man? and who is like to thee in Israel? wherefore then hast thou not kept thy lord the king? for there came one of the people in to destroy the king thy lord.

26:16 This thing is not good that thou hast done. As the LORD liveth, ye are worthy to die, because ye have not kept your master, the LORD's anointed.

addressed Abner as the captain of Saul's army and thus the one responsible for the king's safety. Abner's question of "who" went unanswered, for it would be evident soon enough. David's approach was on the wry side, a tender taunt with a humorous undertone, rather than the bitterness one might expect. There of course was a measure of cheek as well to so rudely handle the camp of the king. But then Saul was rudely handling David and company!

Vs. 15-16 – *"Wherefore then hast thou not kept thy lord the king?"* – Abner would very likely have been doubtful at first. If any had really come to their camp it could only have been to approach the edge of it. Surely none could have gotten close to the king. Folks tend to paint their accomplishments in far bolder hues than reality most times. If it were not dark, all might have seen the colour in Abner's face; with anger at first for such a foolish claim, but soon turning to greatest shame and embarrassment before all for his failure. Though Abner might like to think himself a valiant man, he, like Saul, had

26:17 And Saul knew David's voice, and said, Is this thy voice, my son David? And David said, It is my voice, my lord, O king.
26:18 And he said, Wherefore doth my lord thus pursue after his servant? for what have I done? or what evil is in mine hand?

not proven himself strong against Goliath. The men on both hills knew who was the true valiant man among them. So David was having a friendly go at Abner here, and probably enjoying himself. In the process he was winning friends on both sides. I suspect there were smiles on a good many faces in the darkness that night. David's whole approach here would have gone over well with such men of war. For he was showing himself a man's man, a man of attractive character.

"Now see where the king's spear is" – Perhaps about the time Abner ruled out the whole thing as a silly hoax of some troubled fool, David suggested the king's missing items, and all eyes would have turned as one to the king's bed. None would fail to appreciate the nerve of the man.

Vs. 17-18 – *"Is this thy voice, my son David"* – With David identified, the question of why (*"wherefore?"*) was publicly put to Saul. The nature of David's guilt was the question Saul had consistently refused to answer. But now it was put to him before all, as putting him on public trial. It was Saul's own

26:19 Now therefore, I pray thee, let my lord the king hear the words of his servant. If the LORD have stirred thee up against me, let him accept an offering: but if they be the children of men, cursed be they before the LORD; for they have driven me out this day from abiding in the inheritance of the LORD, saying, Go, serve other gods.

26:20 Now therefore, let not my blood fall to the earth before the face of the LORD: for the king of Israel is come out to seek a flea, as when one doth hunt a partridge in the mountains.

persistent folly that brought him to this open embarrassment.

Vs. 19 – If it was indeed the Lord stirring Saul against David then he was ready and willing to put it right with the Lord. If it was the words of men stirring him then they were liars and worthy of God’s curse. For their slander served to force David away from God’s people and Promised Land. Again David tactfully suggested the slanderous work of others rather than pointing to the evil arising from within Saul himself (24:9).

Vs. 20 – David again pled himself a petty cause, one unworthy of the time and expense Saul was putting into this endeavour (24:14). In speaking of his blood falling to the earth “*before the face of the LORD*” David perhaps subtly referred to Abel’s innocent blood shed by Cain, and crying to the Lord “*from the ground*” (Gen. 4:10); blood wickedly spilled as well out of jealousy for the Lord’s lost favour.

Vs. 21 – “*Then Saul said, I have sinned*” – We have

26:21 Then said Saul, I have sinned: return, my son David: for I will no more do thee harm, because my soul was precious in thine eyes this day: behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly.

26:22 And David answered and said, Behold the king's spear! and let one of the young men come over and fetch it.

heard it all before (15:24; 24:17). Yet now it was a decidedly public declaration of Saul's sinfulness and foolishness and exceedingly great wrong against David. As before, it was the goodness of David that turned Saul's heart, his grace toward Saul in response to Saul's malice toward him. Yet it is not surprising that David did not heed the king's call to "*return*". Do we get the impression from 27:4 that Saul might have been led to later pursue again if David were still within the borders?

Vs. 22 – "*Behold the king's spear*" – With Saul's pathetic confession, David seems to brush him aside, not even responding directly to him at first. The king in his foolishness before all had made himself the one not worth the time. In his flight from the Lord in pursuit of his own interests and prominence before men Saul had brought himself down to the place of public disgrace. In leaving the Lord he lost all he had sought to gain or keep by leaving the Lord. While David, in clinging to the Lord, gained all that Saul wished to be before men. It is such a pitifully heartbreaking scene! And yet

26:23 The LORD render to every man his righteousness and his faithfulness; for the LORD delivered thee into my hand to day, but I would not stretch forth mine hand against the LORD's anointed.

26:24 And, behold, as thy life was much set by this day in mine eyes, so let my life be much set by in the eyes of the LORD, and let him deliver me out of all tribulation.

still the man could not be trusted with his word.

Vs. 23 – *“The LORD render to every man his righteousness”* – With David it was all about *“the LORD”*. He was looking to the Lord to give a man according to his doings. He saw the Lord involved in putting Saul in his hand again that night. And it was only the Lord’s anointing of Saul that kept David from taking his life. It was not for David’s goodness to Saul but for the Lord’s goodness to Saul that David refrained.

Vs. 24 – *“So let my life be much set by in the eyes of the LORD”* – David had esteemed Saul high that day, much higher than he deserved. Even so David looked to be handled the same. But he did not look to Saul to respond to him in kind. He looked to *the Lord* to so respond to him in Saul’s behalf. It is the Lord who rewards us according to our doings toward others. We are not to look to others to pay us back for our kindness to them. It will help us when forgotten. God’s wisdom says *“He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that*

26:25 Then Saul said to David, Blessed be thou, my son David: thou shalt both do great things, and also shalt still prevail. So David went on his way, and Saul returned to his place.

which he hath given will He pay him again” (Prov.19:17). God will handle the pay-backs. Jesus said we will be blessed when we bless those who *“cannot recompense thee”*, for we will *“be recompensed at the resurrection of the just”* (Lk. 14:12-14; 7:34-35). We grace others seeking God’s smile, not theirs.

Vs. 25 – Again the king spoke a blessing over David’s life (24:20). It seemed to dawn upon Saul at last that he would not prevail against David. Yet notice that he did not acknowledge that it was really a matter of not prevailing against the Lord. For Saul, it was all about David and his great ability to prevail. Again, as always, the Lord’s critical part was missing from Saul’s reckoning. It seems he was a man fundamentally angry with God. Though forced by circumstance to these words of acknowledgement through David’s amazing abilities, yet Saul refused to see the Lord in David’s successes!

David’s approach that night was the very finest he could have used, winning the greatest victory he could possibly have won over Saul. Through grace

27:1 And David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul: there is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines; and Saul shall despair of me, to seek me any more in any coast of Israel: so shall I escape out of his hand.

and boldness he turned his enemy to friend and further won the hearts of his people. See again how *with* the Lord a man can be right in the midst of the enemy camp and yet without discovery. *Without* the Lord, the object of one's quest can be right in the very midst and yet never be discovered. Our success or failure can be *that close* and never find us, depending upon our standing with God!

27:1-12 – David Takes Refuge in Philistia

Vs. 1 – *“I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul”* – We are now allowed into David's thoughts as he debated how best to handle Saul's erratic behaviour. He was clearly unconvinced by Saul's words. Yet unfortunately it was the Lord's words of which David was unconvinced at this point as well. For while he could trust the Lord to keep him as he crept into Saul's camp, he would not trust the Lord to continue to keep him from Saul in the land. How high he did fly in the last chapter, as the champion of God again. Yet how low he did go in this chapter, as he faithlessly frets over the “uncertainty” of God's care. How often a time of great victory is followed

by Satan's attack on our faith. The evil one is eager to cut short our flight and bring an end to soaring success. David dips into failure and falsehood in this flight to the Philistines. And so suddenly from this point the Lord's name is absent from his lips. Was David really going to perish "*by the hand of Saul*"? Would the Lord allow this? Why the need for this emigration, for a change of approach when the other was working so well? If David would just stand back and honestly look at the bigger picture he might be moved to marvel at all the Lord had given him there in Judah;

- He had received a great following of some 600 men with their families.
- He had found a gem of a wife in Abigail.
- His popularity had soared among the men of his people.
- He had gained in Nabal's property a means to sustain himself.
- He had received greatest affirmation of the Lord's ability to protect him.

It can often do our hearts a world of good to throw off the blinkers and really look at what the Lord has done for us, in us, through us.

27:2 *And David arose, and he passed over with the six hundred men that were with him unto Achish, the son of Maach, king of Gath.*

27:3 *And David dwelt with Achish at Gath, he and his men, every man with his household, even David with his two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the Carmelitess, Nabal's wife.*

The land of the Philistines was no place for David and company. There they must live a lie as if they had turned traitor against Israel. And then they must later reveal their true heart and “turn traitor” again against Achish. At one point David is trusting God alone and the next he is trusting the arm of flesh. See again how he was a real, fallible people, living in the real world, struggling with the same leanings toward failure of faith with which we too struggle. Oh we will hear very little communication with God from David while down there. And for the first time there will be trouble among David’s followers while down there as well (30:21-22). And for the first time they will suffer defeat and loss down there (30:1-6). There can be no doubt that this was a step *down!* It was a time when David needed another Abigail standing in his way. But for some reason the Lord let His servant suffer the resulting consequences this time.

Vs. 2-4 – “*He passed over...unto Achish*” – So it was back to Achish, “*king of Gath*” (21:10-15). This was an intriguing confederacy. In their awareness of

27:4 *And it was told Saul that David was fled to Gath; and he sought no more again for him.*
27:5 *And David said unto Achish, If I have now found grace in thine eyes, let them give me a place in some town in the country, that I may dwell there: for why should thy servant dwell in the royal city with thee?*

what was happening across the border the Philistines would have known of Saul's efforts to kill David. It seems on this basis they did not suspect David a spy or threat. Apparently for David and company to join Achish was a prize, and thus they were given a place to stay in "*the royal city*" of Gath. Even though the Philistines had suffered losses from David previously (23:5), these concerns were set aside for the good possibilities association with David provided against the enemy they hated more in Saul. When they at last succeeded in crushing Saul, they would have no need for David anymore, and he and his band would have likely then become an entry on their hit list as well.

Vs. 5-6 – "*Let them give me a place in some town in the country*" – Under the pretence of humility, of being a lowly servant of Achish and thus unworthy to dwell in the king's own city, David requested the use of a town in a more out-lying area. His true reasons for such a request probably related more to avoiding the close scrutiny of the Philistines and their pagan influences. David was trying to improve on the bad situation in which he had placed his

27:6 Then Achish gave him Ziklag that day: wherefore Ziklag pertaineth unto the kings of Judah unto this day.
27:7 And the time that David dwelt in the country of the Philistines was a full year and four months.
27:8 And David and his men went up, and invaded the Geshurites, and the Gezrites, and the Amalekites: for those nations were of old the inhabitants of the land, as thou goest to Shur, even unto the land of Egypt.

people. Achish of course had previously shown himself quite easy to deceive, and David was at it again.

“Then Achish gave him Ziklag that day” – Ziklag was a fortunate choice, being situated about 28 kms south-east of Gath. The town of Ziklag was in south central Palestine in the area originally shared by Simeon and Judah after the conquest of the land (Josh. 19:5), but apparently later captured by the Philistines. It seems Achish simply cleared the place of his own people in giving it to David and his men with their families. Such is life under a monarch. Individual “rights” hold only until the king proclaims something else righter. From the time of David’s occupation the town remained in the possession of Israel (Judah).

Vs. 8-9, 11 – The land of Geshuri was to the south of Palestine. With the Philistines, the Geshurites were among those not conquered in the conquest of Canaan (Josh. 13:2-3). The Gezrites were an

27:9 And David smote the land, and left neither man nor woman alive, and took away the sheep, and the oxen, and the asses, and the camels, and the apparel, and returned, and came to Achish.

27:10 And Achish said, Whither have ye made a road to day? And David said, Against the south of Judah, and against the south of the Jerahmeelites, and against the south of the Kenites.

27:11 And David saved neither man nor woman alive, to bring tidings to Gath, saying, Lest they should tell on us, saying, So did David, and so will be his manner all the while he dwelleth in the country of the Philistines.

unknown people dwelling somewhere between Geshuri and the Amalekites (those condemned by the Lord and hammered by Saul, yet with traces still existing south of Palestine). From Ziklag David began launching attacks to the south on the enemies of Israel who were meant to be defeated in the conquest. In doing so they enriched themselves on the spoils, making sure none were left in the areas attacked to bring word of their activities to gullible Achish. When living a double life there is always need to carefully cover one's tracks.

Vs. 10 – *“Whither have ye made a road today?”* – When Achish enquired of David's activities he was quick with more lies, speaking rather of attacks against areas of southern Israel and their ancient friends the Kenites. David was attacking Israel's enemies while leading Achish to believe he was attacking Philistine enemies.

Vs. 12 – *“Achish believed David”* – David was

27:12 And Achish believed David, saying, He hath made his people Israel utterly to abhor him; therefore he shall be my servant for ever.

obviously as good a liar as he was an actor before Achish, for the king of Gath swallowed his story entirely. He presumed that by such actions against Israel David was making himself more thoroughly hated by his own people, and thus all the more sure to remain a Philistine ally.

Again, here in the hands of Achish was the champion who would bring greatest defeat to the Philistines in coming years, yet they never even knew what they had. When the true God of heaven is refused a place in your heart and life the key to victory for you and your people can be right in your hands and you never realize it!

“Then said Samuel,
Wherefore then
dost thou ask of me,
seeing the LORD
is departed from thee,
and is become thine enemy?”

(1 Sam. 28:16)

Class 19 – I Samuel 28-29

28:1 *And it came to pass in those days, that the Philistines gathered their armies together for warfare, to fight with Israel. And Achish said unto David, Know thou assuredly, that thou shalt go out with me to battle, thou and thy men.*

28:2 *And David said to Achish, Surely thou shalt know what thy servant can do. And Achish said to David, Therefore will I make thee keeper of mine head for ever.*

28:1-25 – Saul Consults a Witch at Endor

Vs. 1-2 – “*Know thou assuredly, that thou shalt go out with me to battle*” – As the Philistines geared up again for battle against Israel, David and company were now drawn into involvement with them. See how David’s lies to Achish of attacks against his own people (27:10) now come back to haunt him. Troubles “escaped” through dishonesty only lead to greater troubles and thus greater dishonesty. Lesser trusts are always only a vain and temporary hope, and only ever make matters worse in the end.

The words of Achish were more statement than suggestion, that David and company would certainly be going along. There was no way out of this for David without revealing his true colours, leaving him and his followers open to Philistine wrath. His only option was to play along with it for the moment while praying for some way of escape. For Achish it was likely a test of loyalty. And with

28:3 *Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had lamented him, and buried him in Ramah, even in his own city. And Saul had put away those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land.*

David's quick and positive response he was even granted a position of honour as the *"keeper of mine head"*, as Achish's private guard force.

"Surely thou shalt know what thy servant can do" – David comes across a bit prideful here. Was he acting again? How could he actually follow through on Achish's demand? Would he, as Jacob with Esau, use some diversion to excuse himself? (Gen. 33) Perhaps he was planning to turn to Israel's support in the midst of the battle? But such treachery employed even against their enemy would not go over well with his own people. It is likely David was calling on God for help in his dilemma.

Vs. 3 – We can feel with Saul the tightening noose with this setting of the scene. His old enemies were gathering again and without any possible sources of counsel or help available. The priests Saul himself had removed in the Nob massacre. It seems the only source for enquiring of God was with David in Abiathar.

"Saul had put away those that had familiar spirits"

28:4 *And the Philistines gathered themselves together, and came and pitched in Shunem: and Saul gathered all Israel together, and they pitched in Gilboa.*
28:5 *And when Saul saw the host of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart greatly trembled.*

– There was some good in Saul in his firm dealing with occult involvement according to the law. That he had “*put away*” occultist refers to capital punishment (vs. 9). Such practices were condemned by God, punishable by death, and those who use such practitioners condemned as well (Deut. 18:8-10; Lev. 19:31; 20:6, 27).

Vs. 4 – “*The Philistines...came and pitched in Shunem*” – Shunem was on the northern slopes of the valley of Jezreel, near Mt. Tabor. Gilboa was a few kilometres to the south of the city of Jezreel, across the wide valley. In their choice of the field of battle the Philistines likely wanted a place where they could get their chariots into action.

Vs. 5 – “*Saul...was afraid, and his heart greatly trembled*” – Saul had faced the Philistines several times and had only known success;

- Jonathan’s victory (chapter 13-14).
- David’s defeat of Goliath (chapter 17).
- When called from pursuing David (24:27-28).

28:6 And when Saul enquired of the LORD, the LORD answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets.

28:7 Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and enquire of her. And his servants said to him, Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at Endor.

On the first 2 occasions he faced them with great fear as well. For Saul, without the Lord, the Philistines were a fearful foe in those days. Perhaps he had some awareness that this would be the end for him, for he knew David was waiting in the wings and would be king in his place. Saul's fear was a sign of God's absence from his life (II Tim. 1:7).

Vs. 6 – *“The LORD answered him not”* – All sources had gone silent with heaven as brass. From the time Saul unlawfully took the priests' role at Gilgal and would not repent God was not responding to him (chapter 13; 14:37). And from those early days God never seemed to feature in Saul's life. Why would Saul think God might be available for him now in his time of distress when he had never been available for God? See the contrast with David, who lived much closer to the Lord and so had access to His help in times of need (23:2, 4, 9-12; 30:6-9). Compare again Proverbs 1:24-31 & Isaiah 1:15.

Vs. 7 – *“Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit”* – Rather than going directly to God for the reasons

for His silence, Saul easily turned to spiritualism, what he knew was forbidden. Such a move only confirmed that there was no real commitment to God or His will in Saul. The truth of what is in us comes out when we are up against it, facing the stress of a trying circumstance. All of the superficial props fly off at such times and our true trusts are exposed. Saul fell here to what God called “*abomination*” (Deut. 18). According to I Chronicles 10:13-14 this turn was part of the reason God took Saul’s life (so there was still hope even at that point?). Though Saul inquired of the Lord at this late stage, the Lord says there that he “*inquired not*” as the general rule of his life.

Saul’s request for a woman so involved suggests that such divination was especially the domain of women. One with “*a familiar spirit*” was involved in necromancy, the practice of consulting or communing with the dead. Such “*familiar spirits*” are demons thought to be guiding or helping spirits. Through these “helping” spirits necromancers or mediums suppose they are able to contact the spirits of people who have died. In reality they are only dealing with demons working with craftiness, with the subtle ability to impersonate the sights and sounds and smells of one who has died. Demons have access to details of private knowledge as well,

28:8 And Saul disguised himself, and put on other raiment, and he went, and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night: and he said, I pray thee, divine unto me by the familiar spirit, and bring me him up, whom I shall name unto thee.

adding to their ability to deceive. But in this situation it seems the Lord took over and actually brought up Samuel.

Vs. 8 – Saul likely justified this action in that he could get no communication from God. But the blame for God’s silence rested on Saul entirely. Folks still do the same, falling to sinful ways when the way of righteousness “does not work”, showing themselves uncommitted to God or His right way. The Lord perhaps allows such pressures to display to us and others where our commitment really lies. Waiting for the right mate “does not work” so we make a grab for what is wrong. Dressing the Lord’s way subjects us to mockery, it does not work, so we dress the world’s way. Being good brings no joy or wins no friends, at least not the kind we want, so we live on the edges of being bad. God’s right way does not draw the attention my ego desires so we introduce a dose of the world to our ways. If we cannot find the kind of help we want with God, then we turn to a lower source, with perhaps a touch of a persecuted feeling onboard that God has failed us. But God does not fail those who walk with Him. He

28:9 And the woman said unto him, Behold, thou knowest what Saul hath done, how he hath cut off those that have familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land: wherefore then layest thou a snare for my life, to cause me to die?

28:10 And Saul sware to her by the LORD, saying, As the LORD liveth, there shall no punishment happen to thee for this thing.

was available for David, lifting him to strength and blessing.

Vs. 9 – “*Wherefore then layest thou a snare for my life*” – It was a dangerous game in that day and place, requiring greatest caution. Obviously there was good money in this profession to warrant such risks. So she was wary at first, checking this stranger out, suspicious of spies, looking for some assurance that this was a safe bet. Perhaps Saul had previously used undercover agents to locate offenders. This was one who had survived, apparently through just such cagey cautions.

Vs. 10 – “*As the LORD liveth...*” – Oh the heartache to hear Saul actually use the Lord’s name in practicing his evil departure from the Lord. Compare Proverbs 7:14, where the adulteress actually began her seduction of the simple man with the assurance of spiritual correctness, as if the Lord’s kiss of blessing were on it. Saul swore upon the certainty of the Lord’s existence while living as if He did not exist. For the Lord’s name to be

28:11 Then said the woman, Whom shall I bring up unto thee? And he said, Bring me up Samuel.

28:12 And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice: and the woman spake to Saul, saying, Why hast thou deceived me? for thou art Saul.

28:13 And the king said unto her, Be not afraid: for what sawest thou? And the woman said unto Saul, I saw gods ascending out of the earth.

mentioned two times in one verse is unheard of with Saul, yet now only in his abuse of God's holy name!

Vs. 11-12 – “*Bring me up Samuel*” – Being sufficiently assured, the woman went to her evil work. But as she proceeded in her mystic methods there was some communication to her of Saul's identity. Her great surprise suggests that something strange happened here compared to the normal practice. There was something special about Samuel's appearing, something different from the normal that was a clue to her. I believe the difference from the norm was in the Lord actually taking over at that point, using the situation as a means to bring His message of doom to Saul. It seems Saul did not see Samuel's actual form. Only the woman saw this. Saul heard the old man's voice.

Vs. 13 – “*I saw gods ascending out of the earth*” – She saw more than one being, as if others, perhaps angels, accompanied Samuel. They were “*ascending out of the earth*”. Consider how often the

- 28:14 *And he said unto her, What form is he of? And she said, An old man cometh up; and he is covered with a mantle. And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he stooped with his face to the ground, and bowed himself.*
- 28:15 *And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up? And Saul answered, I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams: therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do.*
- 28:16 *Then said Samuel, Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing the LORD is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy?*
-

place of the dead is referred to in the Bible as down or below. Jesus said that in His death He would be “*in the heart of the earth*” (Matt. 12:40).

Vs. 14 – “*Saul perceived that it was Samuel*” – With her description of the “*old man*” Saul recognized Samuel and bowed in reverence.

Vs. 15 – “*Why hast thou disquieted me?*” – Perhaps the voice of Samuel speaking from the dead came through the woman’s mouth asking the why of this intrusion into his peace.

“*I am sore distressed*” – Saul was at his wits end, and utterly without help. He just did not know what to do or which way to turn. Samuel never answered his question of what Saul should do, for he had only to die!

Vs. 16 – “*The LORD is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy*” – Did Saul think Samuel stood

28:17 And the LORD hath done to him, as he spake by me: for the LORD hath rent the kingdom out of thine hand, and given it to thy neighbour, even to David:

28:18 Because thou obeyedst not the voice of the LORD, nor executedst his fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore hath the LORD done this thing unto thee this day.

differently than with God? If God would not help him what was Samuel going to do for him? Perhaps Saul would not have gone so far as to use the word “*enemy*”. As he saw things, it was just that the Lord was not being very friendly. But Jesus said the one “*not with Me is against Me*” (Matt. 12:30), and the Apostle Paul said “*the carnal mind is enmity against God*” (Rom. 8:7).

Vs. 17 – As God does with all, so He did with Saul. God simply did “*as He spake*”. He did just exactly what He had said through His prophet that He would do. And that according to a simple, normal understanding of His words, even though many decades (or centuries) may have slipped by since His words were spoken. In his life, Samuel had told Saul this, but now with the added feature of David actually named (15:28; 13:14).

Vs. 18 – “*Because thou obeyedst not the voice of the LORD*” – It was all because Saul just would not seek or do the Lord’s will. He knew what to do but refused to do it. It is that simple.

28:19 *Moreover the LORD will also deliver Israel with thee into the hand of the Philistines: and to morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me: the LORD also shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines.*

“Nor executedst His fierce wrath upon Amalek” – Obedience to God still involves executing His wrath upon sin and sinner, and still it is the hardest part of obedience, especially in a permissive climate as in our modern world. This even though Saul *mostly* obeyed against Amalek and even sought to cut off occult practitioners. Yet God labelled him disobedient. Compare Josiah’s harshly obedient efforts at reform (II Ki. 23). Compare the hard work of church discipline (II Cor. 5).

Vs. 19 – It was all bad news and without a shred of help for Saul. A return to Ichabod. As it was in the closing days of Eli’s leadership so it would be in Saul’s final hours. The Philistines would finally achieve the victory over Israel they had sought since the days of Eli, though it would be short-lived due to David’s leadership as it was due to Samuel’s.

“Tomorrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me” – Saul and sons would be *“with”* Samuel in death, not necessarily in Abraham’s bosom, that part of hades where the redeemed dwelt. That Saul’s sons would die as well, meant that not only Jonathan would be

28:20 Then Saul fell straightway all along on the earth, and was sore afraid, because of the words of Samuel: and there was no strength in him; for he had eaten no bread all the day, nor all the night.

killed. As with Eli and sons, God was going to remove in one day the main individuals who might be expected to inherit the office He had planned for David. That it would be the Lord's doing should have been some comfort to Saul, had his heart been right.

It seems this visit from Samuel was no demon impersonation but the old prophet actually making an appearance from the dead, because;

- We see by the reaction of the woman that it was very different from her normal experience.
- The text and Saul identified the visitor as Samuel (vs. 12, 14, 15, 16).
- A true message from God was spoken rather than error from the evil one.

The writer clearly expected us to understand that this was indeed Samuel himself. Consider how this confirms the reality of conscious existence after death.

- 28:21 And the woman came unto Saul, and saw that he was sore troubled, and said unto him, Behold, thine handmaid hath obeyed thy voice, and I have put my life in my hand, and have hearkened unto thy words which thou spakest unto me.*
- 28:22 Now therefore, I pray thee, hearken thou also unto the voice of thine handmaid, and let me set a morsel of bread before thee; and eat, that thou mayest have strength, when thou goest on thy way.*
- 28:23 But he refused, and said, I will not eat. But his servants, together with the woman, compelled him; and he hearkened unto their voice. So he arose from the earth, and sat upon the bed.*
-

Vs. 20 – “*Then Saul fell straightway*” – Who knows what Saul was hoping to hear, but this certainly was not to his liking. He simply collapsed on the ground in complete loss of strength through his utter anguish and lack of food.

Vs. 21-22 – Though a child of the devil, this woman felt compassion for a man so utterly distressed. She knew how food can lift the spirit and give the strength Saul needed. Yet it was probably not all caring and thoughtfulness in her, for it was already night when they got started and now later. Though concerned for Saul’s strength, her comment was perhaps suggestive of her wish for them to be going on their way.

Vs. 23 – “*I will not eat*” – Though Saul refused food, we have seen in the past his willingness to be arm-twisted against his stated purposes; when his men talked him out of his solemn vow to kill Jonathan (chapter 14), and when the Ziphites led him to come

28:24 And the woman had a fat calf in the house; and she hasted, and killed it, and took flour, and kneaded it, and did bake unleavened bread thereof:

28:25 And she brought it before Saul, and before his servants; and they did eat. Then they rose up, and went away that night.

29:1 Now the Philistines gathered together all their armies to Aphek: and the Israelites pitched by a fountain which is in Jezreel.

29:2 And the lords of the Philistines passed on by hundreds, and by thousands: but David and his men passed on in the rereward with Achish.

for David against his vow to spare him (26:1).

Vs. 24-25 – The woman killed and cooked her fattened calf for Saul and his men. This perhaps partly out of genuine concern, and partly seeking to make a friend of one who could be a very bad enemy, now that it was known to the king what and where she was.

29:1-11 – David Released from Philistine War

Vs. 1-2 – “*The lords of the Philistines passed on by hundreds, and by thousands*” – The scene now shifts back to the various branches of the Philistine “armies” setting themselves up for attack. They began with a mustering of troops in the area of Aphek, on the coastal plains far to the south and west of Jezreel, from which they had launched a successful attack so many decades before. The Philistine nation was divided into 5 provinces ruled separately by 5 lords or kings. David and his men

29:3 *Then said the princes of the Philistines, What do these Hebrews here? And Achish said unto the princes of the Philistines, Is not this David, the servant of Saul the king of Israel, which hath been with me these days, or these years, and I have found no fault in him since he fell unto me unto this day?*

travelled north to this rallying point aligned with Achish of Gath.

Vs. 3 – “*What do these Hebrews here?*” – Perhaps it was the first that the other lords of the land knew of David and his men among their people. Certainly it was the first they knew of the intention that they would join in their attack on Israel. Achish padded the story to his favour in changing from “*these days*” to “*these years*”, making David appear more the long-time loyal subject than he really was. David was only with Achish for 16 months from start to finish (27:6). “These months” would have been the fairer way to put it, but that did not sound long enough to confirm David’s credibility. Folks are still given to the same, shading the facts through a subtle choice of words instead of just stating the bare truth. We do not want to admit our fault, so we suggest it was the fault of some other who caused our oversight. We do not want to say we just forgot, so we point to disruptions and distractions that sidetracked us. We do not want to say we just did not leave soon enough, making us late, so we point to unexpected delaying factors.

29:4 *And the princes of the Philistines were wroth with him; and the princes of the Philistines said unto him, Make this fellow return, that he may go again to his place which thou hast appointed him, and let him not go down with us to battle, lest in the battle he be an adversary to us: for wherewith should he reconcile himself unto his master? should it not be with the heads of these men?*

Though Achish had “*found no fault*” in David, he had not been looking very hard or listening very well. David had been feeding the man lies about his loyalties from the start. Achish thought he knew David’s heart, but he really did not know him at all. Why was he so eager to trust, and a man who had in fact so effectively deceived him previously? (21:10-15) What advantage for him did David provide? Achish apparently felt that David, having been Saul’s servant, might give them the inside advantage, an edge they needed to finally swing the victory against their bitter enemy.

Vs. 4 – “*Make this fellow return*” – Though Achish was a believer in David the other lords were not, and wisely would not have him along. The heat of battle is no time to be watching your backside. Not only might David provide the advantage for Philistia of inside knowledge of Saul, he could provide the same for Saul concerning the Philistine inner workings as well. And what better way for David to win the favour of his king again than to show his loyalty to his own people against their enemies, with “*the*

29:5 *Is not this David, of whom they sang one to another in dances, saying, Saul slew his thousands, and David his ten thousands?*

heads of these men” in his hand, as Goliath’s long ago. How much did they know about David once pleasing his master with a collection of other Philistine parts? (18:27)

We see something of the working of the Philistine system of government here. A majority attitude among the lords decided the issue, and Achish must abide by their decision. Perhaps this is why there were 5 Philistine lords, to provide the 5th vote against any possible dead-lock.

Vs. 5 – “*Is not this David?*” – While Achish said “*is not this David*” who was Saul’s servant (vs. 3), the lords threw back at him “*is not this David*” of whom they sang in victory over the Philistines. The other lords were not as quick as Achish to forget David’s history. And did David ever apologize to them for his victories won against them, for the “*ten thousands*” of them slain? Did he send condolences to the family of Goliath? A thoughtful card and flowers perhaps? Such complications compromise creates. And how could they so easily forgive, though obviously not forgetting?

- 29:6 *Then Achish called David, and said unto him, Surely, as the LORD liveth, thou hast been upright, and thy going out and thy coming in with me in the host is good in my sight: for I have not found evil in thee since the day of thy coming unto me unto this day: nevertheless the lords favour thee not.*
- 29:7 *Wherefore now return, and go in peace, that thou displease not the lords of the Philistines.*
- 29:8 *And David said unto Achish, But what have I done? and what hast thou found in thy servant so long as I have been with thee unto this day, that I may not go fight against the enemies of my lord the king?*
- 29:9 *And Achish answered and said to David, I know that thou art good in my sight, as an angel of God: notwithstanding the princes of the Philistines have said, He shall not go up with us to the battle.*
-

Vs. 6-7 – “*Wherefore now return*” – Even here now, after David had so fallen into trouble for his lies, God provided the way out from the great wrong of fighting against his own people. God was/is there for the imperfect yet sincerely pursuing heart.

Vs. 8 – “*But what have I done?*” – Achish had already told David he found no fault in him. This feigned indignation cannot be seen as a true expression of David’s disappointment, but all part of the act. We have been placed in an interesting position, to see the great confidence of Achish together with the easy deceptions of David. The integrity of this Philistine lord appears greater than David’s during these darker days in David’s walk. We are almost led to pity Achish in being so crudely handled in his simple trust. Compare the greater integrity of Pharaoh and Abimelech in dealing with lying Abraham and Isaac in Genesis 12 & 26.

29:10 Wherefore now rise up early in the morning with thy master's servants that are come with thee: and as soon as ye be up early in the morning, and have light, depart.

29:11 So David and his men rose up early to depart in the morning, to return into the land of the Philistines. And the Philistines went up to Jezreel.

Vs. 9-11 – “*Thou art good in my sight, as an angel of God*” – David’s character was of an endearing nature to so easily win the hearts of kings and commoners alike (16:21; 18:1, 5). Perhaps it was part of God’s gifting for leadership, even as He stirred in the people a fear of Joshua as he stepped into a place of leadership (Josh. 3:7; 4:14).

We hear nothing of the attitude of David’s followers with their near involvement in fighting beside the ancient enemy of their nation and against their own people. Yet there surely must have been much opposition within their ranks, and relief with their dismissal. It was a failure on David’s part that likely raised some question of his wisdom to lead, concerns likely contributing to the negative response of David’s men upon their soon discovery of the tragedy at Ziklag in the next chapter. How very much David risked in his refusal to simply risk responding according to truth. The one risk far greater than the other.

In the desperate press of the most difficult of circumstances we find David continually wavering

between a right heart of full trust in his God and a wrong-hearted reliance upon deception and intrigue. All while the Lord was persistently pursuing His servant, keeping him from harm, and lifting him to popular admiration among his people. And though these were not days in David's life marked by a perfect walk in faithfulness before the Lord, yet out of this wavering era the Lord has brought to us many of the inspired writings of this "*sweet psalmist of Israel*". How our God is able and willing to use souls so unstable in their faith and imperfect in their ways. And see well how God, even in the perfection of His holiness, is not so given to dismissing or disqualifying imperfect servants, as are we fellow specimens of imperfection.

Class 20 – I Samuel 30-31

30:1 *And it came to pass, when David and his men were come to Ziklag on the third day, that the Amalekites had invaded the south, and Ziklag, and smitten Ziklag, and burned it with fire;*

30:2 *And had taken the women captives, that were therein: they slew not any, either great or small, but carried them away, and went on their way.*

30:3 *So David and his men came to the city, and, behold, it was burned with fire; and their wives, and their sons, and their daughters, were taken captives.*

30:1-31 – Victory Over the Amalekites

Vs. 1-8 – Ziklag Tragedy

Vs. 1-5 – “*The Amalekites had...smitten Ziklag, and burned it with fire*” – When going after Nabal in chapter 25 David took 400 men and left 200 behind to guard their families and possessions (25:13). But apparently the nature of Achish’s demand upon them (28:1) required all 600 of David’s men to gather with the Philistines at Aphek, leaving their women and children without protection in Ziklag. That the Amalekites burned David’s city may perhaps suggest revenge for David’s attacks against them (27:8). Was it God’s pay-back for the mindless mission of joining Achish against Israel? A senseless course that might have even put David face to face with Jonathan in battle! Or was it perhaps all part of the Lord moving David and company back to where they belonged among their

30:4 Then David and the people that were with him lifted up their voice and wept, until they had no more power to weep.

30:5 And David's two wives were taken captives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite.

30:6 And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the LORD his God.

own people? That their women and children were not hurt was only by God's grace, but of course the men did not know at the time how their loved ones fared, only that they found no bodies in the charred ruins of Ziklag.

“Until they had no more power to weep” – It is a very strong statement here. They wept themselves to exhaustion!

Vs. 6 – *“The people spake of stoning him”* – On top of David's great grief in his loss, he faced the added threat of a backlash from his men. If they had not followed David's misguided purpose against their own people they would have been there to save their city and loved ones from this tragedy. How very easy it was to blame David at a time when they wished to pour out their anguish on some scapegoat, for there was certainly fault in him. The folly of the whole charade of escape across the border would never have been so evident as when standing there among the smoking ruins of all they

30:7 And David said to Abiathar the priest, Ahimelech's son, I pray thee, bring me hither the ephod. And Abiathar brought thither the ephod to David.

30:8 And David enquired at the LORD, saying, Shall I pursue after this troop? shall I overtake them? And he answered him, Pursue: for thou shalt surely overtake them, and without fail recover all.

held dear on earth. They had left all to follow David, and now they had lost all in following him. They probably assumed the worst, that their wives and children had been dealt with in the same way they had dealt with others, saving none alive (27:11). And now for the first time since crossing the border David was at last driven to look up. He had been running according to his own direction, and running himself ever further into the quagmire of compromise. But now he finally looked again to God and again found help and guidance there. For David, it is like this heavy knock was the wake-up call, the call of God back. He never hesitated. And again his God was there for him with answers.

Vs. 7-8 – *“And David inquired at the LORD”* – Upon inquiry the Lord’s answer was all encouragement. See how help was there for the asking, even when calling from the tangled briers of foolish compromise with evil. The difference with David was that he asked, and asked from a sincere heart. And so in asking he received. *“Ask, and it shall be given you”* (Matt. 7:7). *“Ye have not, because ye ask*

30:9 So David went, he and the six hundred men that were with him, and came to the brook Besor, where those that were left behind stayed.

30:10 But David pursued, he and four hundred men: for two hundred abode behind, which were so faint that they could not go over the brook Besor.

not” (James 4:2).

“Because he hath set his love upon Me...he shall call upon Me, and I will answer him” (Ps. 91:14-15).

Vs. 9-20 – Raiders Pursued and Crushed

Vs. 9-10 – *“Two hundred abode behind, which were so faint that they could not go”* – Apparently the 3 days of travel from Aphek (vs. 1) with the shock of their loss was too great for these. From Aphek, where the Philistine armies had been rallying, to Ziklag was nearly a 100 km hike. We are not told that these stayers were shirkers, and David did not handle them this way. The loss of these 200 was certainly a sacrifice, for that raiding party could not have been a little band.

See the nature of David’s leadership. He was no demanding slave-driver, whipping all to follow, but kept a looser hold on the reins. He himself was going and most were willing to follow him, but he would not demand the same of all. There was a reasonableness in him. Many among them were much tighter, much more demanding in their view

30:11 And they found an Egyptian in the field, and brought him to David, and gave him bread, and he did eat; and they made him drink water;

30:12 And they gave him a piece of a cake of figs, and two clusters of raisins: and when he had eaten, his spirit came again to him: for he had eaten no bread, nor drunk any water, three days and three nights.

of leadership. Such intolerant ones were later labelled “*wicked men and men of Belial*” (vs. 22).

Vs. 11 – “*They found an Egyptian in the field*” – They discovered in this discarded young Egyptian slave a wealth of information and a ready guide. He had been taken from his own people and made a slave, and was then cast out like a used-up toy by his Amalekite master. He had been left to die in the wilderness by those who cared little for his soul. And so he proved a very willing and valuable help against David’s enemies.

Vs. 12 – “*He had eaten no bread, nor drunk any water, three days and three nights*” – If the distance between Aphek and Ziklag was a 3 day hike, as vs. 1 suggests, and the Amalekites were 3 days gone, then Ziklag must have been hit at about the same time David and company were lining up in Aphek to go into battle against their own people. This adds weight to the suggestion that David’s great loss was allowed by God in answer to the wrong of his way. Therefore the timing given here, and even

- 30:13 And David said unto him, To whom belongest thou? and whence art thou? And he said, I am a young man of Egypt, servant to an Amalekite; and my master left me, because three days ago I fell sick.*
- 30:14 We made an invasion upon the south of the Cherethites, and upon the coast which belongeth to Judah, and upon the south of Caleb; and we burned Ziklag with fire.*
- 30:15 And David said to him, Canst thou bring me down to this company? And he said, Swear unto me by God, that thou wilt neither kill me, nor deliver me into the hands of my master, and I will bring thee down to this company.*
- 30:16 And when he had brought him down, behold, they were spread abroad upon all the earth, eating and drinking, and dancing, because of all the great spoil that they had taken out of the land of the Philistines, and out of the land of Judah.*
-

highlighted.

Vs. 13-14 – “*My master left me, because...I fell sick*” – Rare are the masters like the caring centurion who came to Jesus pleading for the life of his servant with genuine concern (Matt. 8:5-13). The actions of this Amalekite master describe a common tendency in man’s selfish, fallen nature, to use others as long as they are convenient or useful to us, and then to discard them when no longer so. Thus the discarded parent forgotten in a nursing home, “loved” by their children as long as they were useful. Thus the typical unwed mother, deserted by her “lover” when her pregnancy was made known.

Vs. 15-16 – With the assurance that he would be allowed to live, the Egyptian led David to the place where he knew the Amalekites could be found. They were caught in the middle of a grand party, enjoying all the spoils of their raid on the south of

30:17 And David smote them from the twilight even unto the evening of the next day: and there escaped not a man of them, save four hundred young men, which rode upon camels, and fled.

Palestine.

Vs. 17 – “*And David smote them*” – Though the enemy numbers were far greater than those with David, yet on the basis of God’s promise of victory David waded in, turning their sunny picnic to stormy panic. It was surely the Lord who gave them the strength for this (Isa. 40:31); after their 3-day trek from Aphek, the exhaustion of their discovered tragedy, and now a full 24-hour battle in crushing the Amalekite attackers. Only after a night and day of slaughter were their numbers reduced to the 400 men who escaped.

Do you see how the evil done against the Egyptian slave came back to haunt the Amalekites? Again, a race over whom God’s curse had already been spoken (Ex. 17:14). That one who seemed so weak and so easy to mistreat and thrust aside without pity, the same became the very means of their destruction, bringing their destroyer upon them. Even so it will be for Christ-rejecting mankind, those over whom the curse of God has already been spoken. How weak and lowly Jesus may seem to

30:18 *And David recovered all that the Amalekites had carried away: and David rescued his two wives.*

30:19 *And there was nothing lacking to them, neither small nor great, neither sons nor daughters, neither spoil, nor any thing that they had taken to them: David recovered all.*

the man of the world or to the false religionist. How easily discarded are Christ's doctrines and Book and followers in the pursuit of far more interesting things. And yet it is that very rejection, that very rejected One, who will bring rejecting man's doom upon him at the last. For that weak One, so rudely discarded along life's way, is none other than the Judge of all mankind, the very One to whom all must one day give account. Man's rejection of God's right way, and His right way with others, always has a boomerang effect.

Vs. 18-19 – “*And David recovered all*” – Not one smallest item was lost of all that had been taken, just as the Lord had promised that they would “*without fail recover all*” (vs. 8). How fully to be trusted God's spoken promise. Even so with *all* of His promises. David was reminded again here that he could trust God for His care against any number of enemies, for he was anointed to reign and he had God's particular promise of victory that day. Two promises joined in making their success beyond question.

30:20 And David took all the flocks and the herds, which they drave before those other cattle, and said, This is David's spoil.

30:21 And David came to the two hundred men, which were so faint that they could not follow David, whom they had made also to abide at the brook Besor: and they went forth to meet David, and to meet the people that were with him: and when David came near to the people, he saluted them.

Vs. 20 – “*This is David’s spoil*” – Not only did they recover all of their own possessions, they also collected the spoils taken from others as well. Since these things had been fully lost from the perspective of those from whom they had been taken, and since they were now in David’s hand only through their labours, acquired by their own lives placed at risk, therefore all spare spoils over their own recovered goods were also considered “*David’s spoil*”; theirs to be divided among them rather than to be returned to “rightful” owners.

Vs. 21-25 – Division over division of spoils

Vs. 21 – “*David came to the two hundred men*” – We can well imagine the feeling of shame in these who had remained at the brook Besor, shamed before the other men and before their rescued wives and families, in their failure to join the counter-attack, and now that they were rested and feeling better. Perhaps it was not only a question of their physical endurance, but of their faith to believe God for the strength to continue. But David would hold no

30:22 Then answered all the wicked men and men of Belial, of those that went with David, and said, Because they went not with us, we will not give them ought of the spoil that we have recovered, save to every man his wife and his children, that they may lead them away, and depart.

30:23 Then said David, Ye shall not do so, my brethren, with that which the LORD hath given us, who hath preserved us, and delivered the company that came against us into our hand.

grudge, as some among them did. He greeted them in simple friendliness.

Vs. 22 – “*We will not give them ought of the spoil*” – Some were thinking only of their hard-earned spoils. Not only did they not wish to share generally with those who refrained from going along, they did not even want to restore to them their own possessions lost. Again, they followed the principle that spoils recovered became the property of those who recovered them, even among themselves. We even get the impression here that they wanted nothing more to do with them, that those laggards must take their families and go. But it was *God* who had promised and given them the victory. All of their abundance was from His hand. And it was a stingy, selfish way developing among them here that had not been evident among them before.

Vs. 23-25 – “*Ye shall not do so, my brethren*” – Men offered their bitter opinions, and then David simply stated what they would and would not do. He did not open things up for debate. He did not collect

30:24 *For who will hearken unto you in this matter? but as his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff: they shall part alike.*

30:25 *And it was so from that day forward, that he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel unto this day.*

the counsel of many. He did not call for a vote or flip a coin. He simply laid out for them the way things would be handled under his rule, not only for that moment but into the years ahead. Yet David did not come across in a lordly, domineering manner. He spoke firmly (*“ye shall not do so”*) yet graciously, in a way that highlighted their unity and common cause, calling them *“my brethren”*, putting them all together with him on the same level. He then underscored the Lord as their Provider as well as their Protector. They must carefully guard against the thought that any part of their protection or collection was from their own strong arm. It was a time for joy together in their gracious God rather than selfishly hoarding for themselves. So with a word David made it clear that not only would they remain together, not only would those who remained behind receive their families back, not only would they receive their own lost possessions, but they would also have a share with all in the additional spoils as well, as if they too had risked their lives. David’s policy was given to *inclusion* rather than to *exclusion*, based on brotherhood rather than cold performance.

30:26 *And when David came to Ziklag, he sent of the spoil unto the elders of Judah, even to his friends, saying, Behold a present for you of the spoil of the enemies of the LORD;*
 30:27 *To them which were in Bethel, and to them which were in south Ramoth, and to them which were in Jattir,*
 30:28 *And to them which were in Aroer, and to them which were in Siphmoth, and to them which were in Eshtemoa,*
 30:29 *And to them which were in Rachal, and to them which were in the cities of the Jerahmeelites, and to them which were in the cities of the Kenites,*
 30:30 *And to them which were in Hormah, and to them which were in Chorashan, and to them which were in Athach,*
 30:31 *And to them which were in Hebron, and to all the places where David himself and his men were wont to haunt.*

Vs. 26-31 – Gifts to the Elders of Judah

There were many important things expressed by these gifts to the Judean elders;

- David's basic giving nature is manifest (II Sam. 6:19), showing himself friendly. He would gladly share with others God's bountiful blessing upon him. David was making friends among his people, showing statesmanship.
- He demonstrated again his kingly ability to protect and provide for his people. He was perhaps restoring in a measure to those in the south what they had lost in the raid. The cities mentioned here were mostly on the southern end of Judah, and thus likely among those hit by the raiders. In sending spoils from "*the enemies of the LORD*", David

31:1 Now the Philistines fought against Israel: and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines, and fell down slain in mount Gilboa.

31:2 And the Philistines followed hard upon Saul and upon his sons; and the Philistines slew Jonathan, and Abinadab, and Melchishua, Saul's sons.

was showing himself strong over the enemies of his people.

- He displayed the rising star of God's blessing upon him in contrast to Saul's tumble to God's cursing. While Saul was losing, David was winning.

31:1-13 – Saul's End

This brief chapter records one of the greatest tragedies in the history of the nation. And yet, as in the death of John the Baptist, it was the way cleared for God's righteous king to step forward. How often the great tragedies of life are God clearing the way for great blessings.

Vs. 1 – *"The men of Israel fled from before the Philistines"* – When the two armies met it was on the slopes of Mt. Gilboa, a high hill on the southern side of the beautiful, fertile valley of Jezreel. The battle quickly turned against Saul, with most of his army fled or fallen.

- 31:3 And the battle went sore against Saul, and the archers hit him; and he was sore wounded of the archers.*
- 31:4 Then said Saul unto his armourbearer, Draw thy sword, and thrust me through therewith; lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through, and abuse me. But his armourbearer would not; for he was sore afraid. Therefore Saul took a sword, and fell upon it.*
- 31:5 And when his armourbearer saw that Saul was dead, he fell likewise upon his sword, and died with him.*
- 31:6 So Saul died, and his three sons, and his armourbearer, and all his men, that same day together.*
-

Vs. 2-3 – One of the main purposes in any battle was to get the royal family, leaving the opponent without leadership and thus in confusion (I Ki. 22:31). It was bad news pursued by bad news, with the army in flight, Saul's three sons dead, and Saul himself mortally wounded. As with Kings Ahab and Josiah, Saul was first wounded by an archer's arrow.

Vs. 4-6 – *“Draw thy sword, and thrust me through”* – Knowing death and defeat were imminent, and knowing what a hated enemy he was to the Philistines, Saul was terrified of being captured and exhibited among them. With Saul it was always a matter of image before men. He would rather die than suffer Samson's humiliation. When his armour-bearer refused to finish the job the archers began, Saul drew his own sword and fell on the blade, taking his own life, doing what David twice refused to do in taking the life of the Lord's anointed. So ended the life of a man who had lived

31:7 And when the men of Israel that were on the other side of the valley, and they that were on the other side Jordan, saw that the men of Israel fled, and that Saul and his sons were dead, they forsook the cities, and fled; and the Philistines came and dwelt in them.
31:8 And it came to pass on the morrow, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, that they found Saul and his three sons fallen in mount Gilboa.
31:9 And they cut off his head, and stripped off his armour, and sent into the land of the Philistines round about, to publish it in the house of their idols, and among the people.
31:10 And they put his armour in the house of Ashtaroth: and they fastened his body to the wall of Bethshan.

independent of the Lord and therefore lost His sheltering care. The only thing left for the rebellious king were the death and indignities that came upon him and his sons that day. The tragic end of *all* who suffered was the result of Saul's refusal to walk with God. No man suffers alone for his sins. We cannot choose the way of sin without impacting those we love, even those like good and noble Jonathan.

Vs. 7 – So great was the massacre of the army and royal family, and so defenceless was the nation now, that people began clearing out of the cities of Israel, fleeing to distant wilderness areas.

Vs. 8 – We can well imagine what celebrated trophies those royal corpses became when discovered by the Philistines the next day, as proof of Israel's utter defeat before the greater Philistine power, *at last!*

Vs. 9-10 – Saul's head and armour were sent south

31:11 And when the inhabitants of Jabeshgilead heard of that which the Philistines had done to Saul;

31:12 All the valiant men arose, and went all night, and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Bethshan, and came to Jabesh, and burnt them there.

31:13 And they took their bones, and buried them under a tree at Jabesh, and fasted seven days.

as tokens of victory, to be gloated over throughout the land of the Philistines. Saul's body, and those of his three sons, were carried east to Beth-shan, where the Jezreel valley spills into the Jordan. And there those trophies were nailed up in public display on a wall, an act of greatest dishonour against Israel's dead king, certainly to leave them hanging over night (Deut. 21:22-23).

Vs. 11-13 – “*All the valiant men arose*” – Now in these last three verses of the book a surprising thing is revealed; a bright spark of heroism in the midst of such desperately dark scenes of defeat and fear and flight. While all others were running away in fear, their paths crossed with these valiant men of Jabesh-gilead coming in. Upon hearing what the Philistine victors had done, the men of that city immediately planned and executed a foray to Beth-shan under the cover of night to collect the bodies of their king and princes, removing them from such public disgrace. Jabesh was a city in Gilead about 17 kms to the southeast of Beth-shan, across the Jordan. It was a rigorous trek they made through

the Jordan valley in the dark of night. It was a dangerous mission with the Philistines now holding the reins and nobody to limit what they might do in Israel. None could have known at that time that David could be any kind of effective force against the great power of Philistia. Yet these men considered the job something that needed doing. So they “*arose*” and went through the night. And in the quiet of the midnight hours, they took down those four mutilated bodies and they then carried them through the early hours of morning back to their city across the river. And there they burned the bodies and buried the bones, covering their tracks as best they could, yet granting the royal family at least the decency of a proper burial. Consider how such an act of defiance would have been frowned upon by the new power with their trophies stolen.

Why this brave action of those particular valiant men? It was a final act of respect of a grateful people. Remember that 40 years prior Saul’s first public deed as Israel’s new king was to rescue the city of Jabesh-gilead from the Ammonites (chapter 11). And so here for their saviour was a courageous tribute of honour in return. It was a simple determination to arise and do something about a wrong. When David was later crowned in Hebron the very first thing he did was to send messengers

to these men with word of his appreciation and promise of reward (II Sam. 2:4-7).

Consider how easy it would have been for these to justify *inaction*;

- There were tremendous risks, not only to their own lives but to their families.
- Saul's deliverance of their city was so long ago, their father's rescue (right eye) more than their own.
- Because Saul and sons were already dead it was too late to save their lives.
- They might have found excuse in that Saul in many ways *deserved* the indignities he received, he being no shining example of perfect humanity.
- Surely somebody else, the folks on that side of the Jordan or of Saul's own tribe of Benjamin, would do something about it.

Yet see how these men disregarded any such excuse for inaction and just did right, risking their lives for the honour of an ungodly man who was dead. How much more should we risk our lives in honour of the greatest and godliest of men, the righteous Son of God, who died and arose and is alive? How few the

risks we take for Christ as these did for Saul! As these took *immediate* action, not waiting for tomorrow, so Christ's shame and loss is happening *now!* Therefore action is required *right now!* As these did not expect that somebody else would do something, but considered *themselves* to be debtors, so we should see ourselves the same in Christ's mission and arise to pay our debt of love. Inconvenience and personal risks must be disregarded in the necessity of the moment. Though these men took wise precautions in going at night and burning the bodies and burying the bones, they did not hide behind the excuse of undue caution. They knew of the need because they were listening for the needs around them. They were aware. They did not hide behind the excuse of purposeful ignorance. Compare Nehemiah in Persia;

- He listened and heard of shameful conditions away over at Jerusalem.
- He cried and fasted and prayed over what he personally might do about it.
- He went to the trouble and risks of going and doing.

We are no less debtors to our world. We must open our eyes and look to the fields white unto harvest,

with souls living in hopeless deception. Folks excuse themselves from a world of lost sinners for all of the same reasons these valiant men might have used, *but did not*. The risk of loss is too great. Help for such a sin-sick world is too late. They deserve God's judgment anyway. Let somebody else do something about the problem of lost souls. We are wise to disregard all excuses for inaction and just "*go ye into all the world*" and get the job done. As the people of Jabesh-gilead were debtors to Saul for their salvation so we are debtors to our Saviour for giving His life not only for us but for the world.

Then, remember how those valiant men were commended and rewarded by King David when he came to power. Even so our actions in behalf of the King of kings and His people will be rewarded when He returns to reign in His kingdom. How much greater will be the glory before Christ in comparison to the honours these men received before David.

Finally, consider how inappropriate it would have been to send the valiant *women* over to do this task. This was a job for *men!! Valiant men!* Men valiant for the Lord, and valiant for truth.

"I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before Me for the

land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none”
(Ezek. 22:30).

*“I am debtor, both to the Greeks and to the
Barbarians; both to the wise and to the unwise”*
(Rom 1:14).

