

Saul's Demise Continues to Be Magnified as His Foolish Oath Causes Much Harm

1 Samuel 14:24-52

- Saul's foolish vow has profound effects on Israel, Jonathan, and himself, highlighting his continued unbelief and disobedience, failure, and rejection. This serves as a caution to us in example, particularly in continued contrast to Jonathan, a reminder to us of God's design, and a reminder to us of our better King.
- I. A summary of the sections in the story stresses the intent to highlight the folly and effects of Saul's oath.
- **Vs. 24-30** - After Jonathan's faith-enabled success, God's victory, and Israel's subsequent success, Saul, as the men are "hard-pressed," has made an oath that anyone who eats anything before evening is cursed "until he is avenged on his enemies." No one has tasted food, and everyone is afraid to eat because they're afraid of the oath, and this is particularly highlighted as they enter a forest pursuing the Philistines and there is an abundance of honey. Jonathan, unaware of the oath because he has been acting on his faith, eats some of the honey, and is immediately refreshed. He's told of the oath, it's again mentioned that the people are faint, and he replies that Saul has "troubled the land," for eating has refreshed him. He says that their success over the Philistines would have been greater if they could have eaten from their spoils.
 - **Vs. 31-35** - The people continue striking down the Philistines from Michmash to Aijalon (westward), but they are again very faint. Seemingly after evening, they begin hastily slaughtering and eating the spoil of animals from the Philistines without draining the blood. This is a violation of the law (Dt. 12:16 - Only you shall not eat the blood; you shall pour it out on the earth like water.). Saul is told about this, tells them they have "dealt treacherously," and has a great stone rolled to him. He commands everyone to apparently properly slaughter the animals where he is (stone) and eat without sinning against the Lord. They do this. It's mentioned that he builds his first altar, presumably connected to an offering to atone for the people's sin.
 - **Vs. 36-42** - Saul and the men want to wipe out and plunder the Philistines. The priest, Ahijah (Vs. 3), says they need to "draw near" - ask God if they should do this. Saul asks God (Ark [Vs. 18.], Urim and Thummim. Prayer.), and God does not answer him that day. Saul concludes that God is silent because of sin among the people (As the Lord lives, who saves Israel.), and even if it's Jonathan, he will die. No one answers him. Lots are cast, using the Urim and Thummim (Two stones in the breastplate of high priest. yes and no.): Saul and Jonathan vs. Israel. Then Saul vs. Jonathan. The lot falls on Jonathan.
 - **Vs. 43-46** - Saul asks Jonathan what he's done. Jonathan tells him he tasted a little honey with the tip of his staff, and submits to being killed. Saul says, "God do so to me and more also; you shall surely die, Jonathan." The people say, "Shall Jonathan die, who has worked this great salvation in Israel? Far from it! As the Lord lives, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground, for he has worked with God this day." So the people ransomed Jonathan, so that he did not die. Saul stops pursuing the Philistines, and the Philistines go to their own place.
 - **Vs. 47-52** are a kind of summary statement of what Saul accomplishes, and of his family. He successfully defeated surrounding enemies: Moab, Ammon, Edom, Zobah (Syria), the Philistines. He did valiantly, struck the Amalekites, and delivered Israel from those who plundered them. His sons were Jonathan, Ishvi, and Malchishua (Not comprehensive. Fighting?). His daughters were Merab and Michal. His wife was Ahinoam. The commander of his army was Abner the son of Ner, Saul's uncle. His father was Kish. He gathered up valiant men and fought against the Philistines his whole time as king.
- II. The account's design is primarily to continue to demonstrate Saul's failure as his foolish oath has profound consequences.
- A. His oath is wrong and sinful.
- Personal vengeance (Vs. 24.). Self-serving and self-focused. The necessity of sustenance when physically exerting like this. The stress on Jonathan, who has already demonstrated heroism, being refreshed by eating, proves this is bad
 - Some would even argue that he doesn't have the right to proclaim a fast like this and threaten death.
- B. His oath is harmful.

- Stress on distress (Vs. 24, 28, 31, 32 and sin.), because of, not the Philistines, but Saul. The large provision of honey that they can't touch is ridiculous. Just a little bit's effect on Jonathan. Saul's troubling the land. Jonathan's alternative. Saul has limited the success. If Saul had let them eat, they would have eaten the Philistines' food and their victory would have been more thorough.
- It leads to military exhaustion (Vs. 24-30), ritual transgression (Vs. 31-35.), God's silence (Vs. 37.) - and nearly to the destruction of the savior (Vs. 36-46.)!

C. His oath then leads to further failure and sin on his part.

- Saul is portrayed as partly responsible for the people's sin. His concern for the law, with the eating of the blood, though right, is ironic in relation to his foolish oath. Even when he is in the right it seems to be highlighting his inconsistencies, like with the commendation of his military success. Now sacrifices are necessary, and it all goes back to Saul's oath. From that perspective, this is still portraying Saul negatively.
- It was wrong to impose the oath, and it's wrong to pronounce death on the "violator." The people defy Saul and say Jonathan is the hero, has worked with God, and won't die. Saul doesn't pursue the Philistines anymore.
- It seems that particularly pride is apparent here and in chapters 15 and 16.
- I believe, though Jonathan's breaking of the oath is tied to the story, that's not why God is not answering. It's because of Saul's disobedience and the oath itself - the whole of his deterioration. To immediately conclude that someone has sinned that is keeping God silent, and that person will die, is presumptuous. He is out of control. I believe that the lot falling on Jonathan is part of God's design of judgment on Saul. He has Ahijah, from a deposed line, as his priest, and he is estranged from Samuel.
- The text never says that God is being silent specifically because of the oath, sin, and consequences. Yes, the lot falls on Jonathan, but it seems to be God's device to give Saul more rope to hang himself. If God speaks through the Urim and Thummim, it reveals the truth of what happened but does NOT necessarily mean that God labels Jonathan's action sinful. Could he have looked at the apparent guilt and shown mercy?
- Does it seem to you that Saul is primarily concerned about the glory of God or the well-being of God's people? His main concern here seems to be that he gets revenge on his enemies! Look at 1 Sa. 17:45-47

III. How is this related to the overall narrative?

- This is the king the people wanted. Man's choice and trajectory. Contrast with Jonathan, David, and the ideal king. Chp. 12 and God's promises and warnings. Chp. 15 and the final piece of Saul's demise and rejection. Marked end of reign.

IV. What does this say about God?

- God's commands aren't burdensome. Saul limits. God provides. His way is right and expected. God can be silent. He sovereignly directs. He protects. He gives opportunity to repent. He has sovereign design.

V. How is this Christological?

- When we read this and anything else we see Jesus as the better King. He is not oppressive and vengeful to us. He is humble. The hero and innocent one has death threatened, and is willing. Ransom happens here, and in Jesus. He has completely defeated the enemy and worked salvation.

VI. Is there application for us?

- As we stressed last week, the contrast between Jonathan's faith and Saul's failure does speak to us: Pride, self-centeredness, unwillingness to repent, recklessness. This also calls us to be grateful for, worship, trust, and obey our King..