

1 **FOOD, PHILISTINES, AND A FOOLISH VOW**

1 Samuel 14

2 **JONATHAN'S ATTACK**

- *And that first strike, which Jonathan and his armor-bearer made, killed about twenty men within as it were half a furrow's length in an acre of land. And there was a panic in the camp, in the field, and among all the people. The garrison and even the raiders trembled, the earth quaked, and it became a very great panic. (1Sa 14:14-15)*

3 **JONATHAN'S ATTACK**

- Courageously trusting in God's ability to grant Israel victory, whether by many or by few, Jonathan and his armor bearer attacked the Philistine camp and threw them into disarray.
- *And the watchmen of Saul in Gibeah of Benjamin looked, and behold, the multitude was dispersing here and there. (1Sa 14:16)*

4 **ROLL CALL**

- *Then Saul said to the people who were with him, "Count and see who has gone from us." And when they had counted, behold, Jonathan and his armor-bearer were not there. (1Sa 14:17)*
- When Saul finds out that the Philistines are panicking, he takes a quick roll call to figure out who's missing.

5 **"BRING THE ARK OF GOD HERE."**

- *So Saul said to Ahijah, "Bring the ark of God here." For the ark of God went at that time with the people of Israel. (1Sa 14:18)*
- With the Philistines in disarray, the time is ripe to attack. But Saul has already been once guilty in this story of not waiting to hear from God, so he asks the priest to ask God whether or not they should attack.

6 **A TALISMAN**

- The Ark of God was never intended to be brought into battle: however this is not the first time that it was brought into battle as a talisman against the Philistines.
- Their reliance on the presence of the Ark rather than on God is a subtle commentary on Israel's (and Saul's) spiritual state.
- Saul is willing to consult relics and offer sacrifices; but true obedience is another matter.

7 **"WITHDRAW YOUR HAND."**

- *Now while Saul was talking to the priest, the tumult in the camp of the Philistines increased more and more. So Saul said to the priest, "Withdraw your hand." (1Sa 14:19)*
- Saul grows impatient and essentially tells Ahijah the priest, "nevermind!"

8 **WAITING ON THE LORD**

- Saul's impatience once again prevents him from seeking the will of God regarding an important battle – he waffles, deciding at the last minute to make the decision for himself rather than consulting with God.
- Contrast this with Jonathan's commitment to wait on the Lord's clear guidance and hand for his attack. Waiting does not necessarily imply inactivity.

9 **PANIC IN THE CAMP**

- *Then Saul and all the people who were with him rallied and went into the battle. And behold, every Philistine's sword was against his fellow, and there was very great confusion. (1Sa 14:20)*
- Israel goes into battle. The Philistines are so confused and panic that they now begin to

turn upon each other.

10 **FAIR-WEATHER FRIENDS**

- *Now the Hebrews who had been with the Philistines before that time and who had gone up with them into the camp, even they also turned to be with the Israelites who were with Saul and Jonathan. Likewise, when all the men of Israel who had hidden themselves in the hill country of Ephraim heard that the Philistines were fleeing, they too followed hard after them in the battle. (1Sa 14:21-22)*

11 **FAIR-WEATHER FRIENDS**

- A number of Israelites had apparently been serving the Philistines out of either fear or self-interest (or both). These now join Saul in attacking the disorganized Philistines, furthering the latter's panic and paranoia.
- All of Saul's men who had left him for hiding now rejoined him in attacking the Philistine camp and raiding parties.

12 **THE LORD SAVED ISRAEL**

- *So the LORD saved Israel that day. And the battle passed beyond Beth-aven. (1Sa 14:23)*
- It was the Lord who saved Israel that day – not Jonathan and certainly not Saul.
- God was able to use Jonathan's courage and eventually Saul and the men of Israel, but the victory was the Lord's.
- God was able to deliver both by "few" and by "many."

13 **SAUL'S RASH VOW**

- *And the men of Israel had been hard pressed that day, so Saul had laid an oath on the people, saying, "Cursed be the man who eats food until it is evening and I am avenged on my enemies." So none of the people had tasted food. (1Sa 14:24)*

14 **SAUL'S RASH VOW**

- *Now when all the people came to the forest, behold, there was honey on the ground. And when the people entered the forest, behold, the honey was dropping, but no one put his hand to his mouth, for the people feared the oath. (1Sa 14:25-26)*

15 **SAUL'S RASH VOW**

- *But Jonathan had not heard his father charge the people with the oath, so he put out the tip of the staff that was in his hand and dipped it in the honeycomb and put his hand to his mouth, and his eyes became bright. Then one of the people said, "Your father strictly charged the people with an oath, saying, 'Cursed be the man who eats food this day.'" And the people were faint. (1Sa 14:27-28)*

16 **SAUL'S RASH VOW**

- Verse 24 gives us some additional context for this passage and helps us to establish a timeline:
 - The Philistines probably continued their attack on Israel earlier that day, thus the men of Israel were "hard pressed."
 - Jonathan and his armor-bearer are inspired to make their own attack on the Philistine garrison, possibly while the bulk of the Philistine army is returning from pressing Israel.

17 **SAUL'S RASH VOW**

- Verse 24 gives us some additional context for this passage and helps us to establish a timeline:
 - Jonathan had not been present to hear Saul's vow, so we can assume that Saul made the declaration after Jonathan's departure but before he attacked the Philistine garrison.

18 ■ **SAUL'S RASH VOW**

- Saul's vow was problematic on a number of levels. It was foolish from a practical standpoint, because with proper sustenance the men of Israel would have been much more effective.
- It was also demoralizing – the men of Israel were essentially being punished for continuing to stand by Saul against overwhelming odds.

19 ■ **SAUL'S RASH VOW**

- But Saul's vow was also damaging on a completely different level:
 - It was born out of pure selfishness and self-centeredness
- "...until it is the evening and I am avenged on my enemies."
- Saul was angry at his losses, angry at the men who had left him, and so he bound the few who remained by his foolish oath.

20 ■ **SELF-CENTERED LEADERSHIP**

- Saul's vow here is an excellent example of self-centered leadership.
- The fallout from his vow is an excellent example of the destructive impact of self-centered leadership.
- Saul is a vital negative lesson for anybody who is in, will be, or aspires to be in a position of authority. He demonstrates the dangers of making it all about you.

21 ■ **THE DESTRUCTIVE IMPACT OF SELF-CENTERED LEADERSHIP**

22 ■ **1) YOU HINDER THE LORD'S WORK**

- *Then Jonathan said, "My father has troubled the land. See how my eyes have become bright because I tasted a little of this honey. How much better if the people had eaten freely today of the spoil of their enemies that they found. For now the defeat among the Philistines has not been great." (1Sa 14:29-30)*

23 ■ **1) YOU HINDER THE LORD'S WORK**

- Because Israel was literally faint from hunger, and was not able to partake of the provision which God placed on the battlefield, their victory over the Philistines was less than complete.
- God is always capable of accomplishing His work, despite our human frailty. However, if we make it about us, he will accomplish it through someone else.

24 ■ **2) YOU CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT OF LICENSE**

- *They struck down the Philistines that day from Michmash to Aijalon. And the people were very faint. The people pounced on the spoil and took sheep and oxen and calves and slaughtered them on the ground. And the people ate them with the blood. (1Sa 14:31-32)*

25 ■ **2) YOU CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT OF LICENSE**

- *Then they told Saul, "Behold, the people are sinning against the LORD by eating with the blood." And he said, "You have dealt treacherously; roll a great stone to me here." And Saul said, "Disperse yourselves among the people and say to them, 'Let every man bring his ox or his sheep and slaughter them here and eat, and do not sin against the LORD by eating with the blood.'" So every one of the people brought his ox with him that night and they slaughtered them there. (1Sa 14:33-34)*

26 ■ **2) YOU CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT OF LICENSE**

- By this point, the people are so hungry that they have lost all self-control or regard for the Word of God.
- Following Saul's destructive example of ignoring God's commands when it is convenient,

they begin to eat the meat with the blood still in it.

- Self-centeredness in leadership will always be reflected in those under its authority.

27 **3) YOU ALIENATE THOSE NEAREST YOU**

- *And Saul inquired of God, "Shall I go down after the Philistines? Will you give them into the hand of Israel?" But he did not answer him that day. And Saul said, "Come here, all you leaders of the people, and know and see how this sin has arisen today. (1Sa 14:37-38)*

28 **3) YOU ALIENATE THOSE NEAREST YOU**

- *For as the LORD lives who saves Israel, though it be in Jonathan my son, he shall surely die." But there was not a man among all the people who answered him. Then he said to all Israel, "You shall be on one side, and I and Jonathan my son will be on the other side." And the people said to Saul, "Do what seems good to you." (1Sa 14:39-40)*

29 **3) YOU ALIENATE THOSE NEAREST YOU**

- Lots are cast to determine the "guilty" party – Saul cannot hear from God and assumes that it is because someone has violated his command not to eat.
- This may not in fact be the reason.
- Jonathan is eventually identified.

30 **3) YOU ALIENATE THOSE NEAREST YOU**

- *Then Saul said to Jonathan, "Tell me what you have done." And Jonathan told him, "I tasted a little honey with the tip of the staff that was in my hand. Here I am; I will die." And Saul said, "God do so to me and more also; you shall surely die, Jonathan." (1Sa 14:43-44)*

31 **3) YOU ALIENATE THOSE NEAREST YOU**

- *Then the people said to Saul, "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. Then Saul went up from pursuing the Philistines, and the Philistines went to their own place. (1Sa 14:45-46)*

32 **3) YOU ALIENATE THOSE NEAREST YOU**

- Jonathan was Saul's right-hand man. In fact, during this war with the Philistines, it is Jonathan that has managed to strike every major offensive blow.
- Just as Saul's self-centeredness hurt everyone around him, it ultimately hurt Jonathan the most because Jonathan was closest to him.

33 **3) YOU ALIENATE THOSE NEAREST YOU**

- Those nearest us are hurt when we lead in a spirit of self-centeredness:
 - Wives
 - Children
 - Employees
 - Fellow staff members, etc.

34 **4) ONLY EVER EXPERIENCES PARTIAL VICTORY**

- *Then Saul went up from pursuing the Philistines, and the Philistines went to their own place. (1Sa 14:46)*
- *There was hard fighting against the Philistines all the days of Saul. And when Saul saw any strong man, or any valiant man, he attached him to himself. (1Sa 14:52)*

35 **4) ONLY EVER EXPERIENCES PARTIAL VICTORY**

- Because of his self-centeredness, Saul's victory over the Philistines was less than complete.
- God could have delivered the Philistines into his hand for utter destruction that day.
- Instead, they are allowed to return home. They will continue to plague Saul for the remainder of his kingship, eventually being his downfall.

36  **SELF-CENTERED LEADERSHIP**

- 1) Hinders the work of God
 - God is always capable of accomplishing His work, despite our human frailty. However, if we make it about us, he will accomplish it through someone else.
- 2) Creates an environment of license
 - Self-centeredness in leadership will always be reflected in those under its authority.

37  **SELF-CENTERED LEADERSHIP**

- 3) Alienates those nearest you
 - Those nearest us are hurt when we lead in a spirit of self-centeredness.
- 4) Only experiences partial victory
 - Self-centered leadership prevents us from ever experiencing true victory over sin.
 - The extent to which your victory is incomplete is directly proportional to the extent that it is about your self.