



Lesson 66 – The Presumption of Saul

based on 1 Samuel 13 & 14

1) What had just happened in our last lesson?

1 Samuel 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 _____ 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.

1 Samuel 11:15 And all the people went to Gilgal; and there they made Saul _____ 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.

After the assembly at Gilgal, Saul disbanded the army that had at his call arisen to overthrow the Ammonites, reserving only two thousand men to be stationed under his command at Michmash and one thousand to attend his son Jonathan at Gibeah. Here was a serious error. His army was filled with hope and courage by the recent victory; and had he proceeded at once against other enemies of Israel, a telling blow might have been struck for the liberties of the nation.

Meanwhile their warlike neighbors, the Philistines, were active. After the defeat at Ebenezer, they had still retained possession of some hill fortresses in the land of Israel, and now they established themselves in the very heart of the country. In facilities, arms, and equipments the Philistines had great advantage over Israel. During the long period of their oppressive rule, they had endeavored to strengthen their power by forbidding the Israelites to practice the trade of smiths, lest they should make weapons of war. After the conclusion of peace, the Hebrews had still resorted to the Philistine garrisons for such work as needed to be done. Controlled by love of ease and the abject spirit induced by long oppression, the men of Israel had, to a great extent, neglected to provide themselves with weapons of war. Bows and slings were used in warfare, and these the Israelites could obtain; but there were none among them, except Saul and his son Jonathan, who possessed a spear or a sword.

2) What did Saul decide to do in his second year of reign?

1 Samuel 13:2 Saul chose him three thousand men of Israel; whereof two thousand were with _____ in Michmash and in mount Bethel, and a thousand were with _____ in Gibeah of Benjamin: and the rest of the people he sent every man to his tent.

3) How well did Jonathan and his men do?

1 Samuel 13:3 And Jonathan _____ 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.

The first blow was struck by Jonathan, the king's son, who attacked and overcame their garrison at Geba. The Philistines, exasperated by this defeat, made ready for a speedy attack upon Israel. Saul now caused war to be proclaimed by the sound of the trumpet throughout the land, calling upon all the men of war, including the tribes across the Jordan, to assemble at Gilgal. This summons was obeyed.

4) How large was the Philistine attack?

1 Samuel 13:5 And the Philistines gathered themselves together to fight with Israel, _____ 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.

5) How did the Israelites respond to that?

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



As the time for the encounter drew near, the number of desertions rapidly increased, and those who did not withdraw from the ranks were filled with foreboding and terror.

6) What were Saul's instructions when he became king?

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

Day after day Saul tarried, but without making decided efforts toward encouraging the people and inspiring confidence in God. Before the time appointed by the prophet had fully expired, he became impatient at the delay and allowed himself to be discouraged by the trying circumstances that surrounded him. Instead of faithfully seeking to prepare the people for the service that Samuel was coming to perform, he indulged in unbelief and foreboding. The work of seeking God by sacrifice was a most solemn and important work; and God required that His people should search their hearts and repent of their sins, that the offering might be made with acceptance before Him, and that His blessing might attend their efforts to conquer the enemy.

The time for the proving of Saul had come. He was now to show whether or not he would depend on God and patiently wait according to His command, thus revealing himself as one whom God could trust in trying places as the ruler of His people, or whether he would be vacillating and unworthy of the sacred responsibility that had devolved upon him.

7) What did Saul do in the time of waiting?

1 Samuel 13:8 And he tarried seven days, according to the set time that Samuel had appointed: but Samuel came _____ to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him.

1 Samuel 13:9-10 And Saul said, Bring hither a burnt _____ to me, and peace offerings. And he offered the burnt offering. And it came to pass, that as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came; and Saul went out to _____ him, that he might salute him.

The appointed time came, but Samuel the man of God did not immediately appear. God's providence had detained His servant. But Saul's restless, impulsive spirit would no longer be restrained. Feeling that something must be done to calm the fears of the people, he determined to summon an assembly for religious service, and by sacrifice entreat the divine aid. God had directed that only those consecrated to the office should present sacrifices before Him.

The Lord had spoken by His prophet that at this time He would reveal what Israel must do in this crisis. If Saul had fulfilled the conditions upon which divine help was promised, the Lord would have wrought a marvelous deliverance for Israel, with the few who were loyal to the king. But Saul was so well satisfied with himself and his work that he went out to meet the prophet as one who should be commended rather than disapproved.

8) How'd that conversation go?

1 Samuel 13:11 And Samuel said, What hast thou _____? 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;

1 Samuel 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 _____ myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering.

Saul offered excuses for his presumptuous act.



9) What did Saul lose in his presumption?

1 Samuel 13:13 And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done _____: 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.

10) ...But what?

1 Samuel 13:14 But now thy kingdom shall _____ 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 _____ thee.

Either Israel must cease to be the people of God, or the principle upon which the monarchy was founded must be maintained, and the nation must be governed by a divine power. If Israel would be wholly the Lord's, if the will of the human and earthly were held in subjection to the will of God, He would continue to be the Ruler of Israel. So long as the king and the people would conduct themselves as subordinate to God, so long He could be their defense. But in Israel no monarchy could prosper that did not in all things acknowledge the supreme authority of God.

11) What did Samuel do after rebuking Saul?

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

The Holy Spirit had been granted to Saul to enlighten his understanding and soften his heart. He had received faithful instruction and reproof from the prophet of God. And yet how great was his perversity!

Finding his force reduced to six hundred men, Saul left Gilgal and retired to the fortress at Geba, lately taken from the Philistines. This stronghold was on the south side of a deep, rugged valley, or gorge, a few miles north of the site of Jerusalem. On the north side of the same valley, at Michmash, the Philistine force lay encamped while detachments of troops went out in different directions to ravage the country.

Jonathan, the king's son, a man who feared the Lord, was chosen as the instrument to deliver Israel.

12) What plan did Jonathan come up with?

1 Samuel 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 _____ over to the Philistines' garrison, that is on the other side. But he told not his father.

1 Samuel 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 _____.

13) What was his armor bearer's reply?

1 Samuel 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 _____.

The armor-bearer, who also was a man of faith and prayer, encouraged the design, and together they withdrew from the camp, secretly, lest their purpose should be opposed. With earnest prayer to the Guide of their fathers, they agreed upon a sign by which they might determine how to proceed. Then passing down into the gorge separating the two armies, they silently threaded their way, under the shadow of the cliff, and partially concealed by the mounds and ridges of the valley.

14) What did the Philistines say when they discovered the two?

1 Samuel 14:11-12 And both of them _____ 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. 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 _____ them into the hand of Israel.



This challenge was the token that Jonathan and his companion had agreed to accept as evidence that the Lord would prosper their undertaking. Passing now from the sight of the Philistines, and choosing a secret and difficult path, the warriors made their way to the summit of a cliff that had been deemed inaccessible and was not very strongly guarded. Thus, they penetrated the enemy's camp and slew the sentinels, who, overcome with surprise and fear, offered no resistance.

15) What happened?

1 Samuel 14:13-15 And Jonathan climbed up upon his hands and upon his feet, and his armourbearer after him: and they fell before Jonathan; and his armourbearer _____ after him. 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. And there was _____ in the host, in the field, and among all the people: the garrison, and the spoilers, they also trembled, and the earth _____: so it was a very great trembling.

Angels of heaven shielded Jonathan and his attendant, angels fought by their side, and the Philistines fell before them. The earth trembled as though a great multitude with horsemen and chariots were approaching. Jonathan recognized the tokens of divine aid, and even the Philistines knew that God was working for the deliverance of Israel. Great fear seized upon the host, both in the field and in the garrison. In the confusion, mistaking their own soldiers for enemies, the Philistines began to slay one another.

16) Did this go unnoticed by Saul and his men?

1 Samuel 14:16-17 And the watchmen of Saul in Gibeah of Benjamin looked; and, behold, the multitude _____ away, and they went on beating down one another. Then said Saul unto the people that were with him, Number now, and see who is gone from us. And when they had _____, behold, Jonathan and his armourbearer were not there.

Seeing that the Philistines were meeting with a repulse, Saul led his army to join the assault. The Hebrews who had deserted to the enemy now turned against them; great numbers also came out of their hiding places, and as the Philistines fled, discomfited, Saul's army committed terrible havoc upon the fugitives.

17) What foolish command did Saul give in the melee?

1 Samuel 14:24 And the men of Israel were _____ that day: for Saul had adjured the people, saying, _____ 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.

The victory had already been gained, without Saul's knowledge or co-operation, but he hoped to distinguish himself by the utter destruction of the vanquished army. The command to refrain from food was prompted by selfish ambition, and it showed the king to be indifferent to the needs of his people when these conflicted with his desire for self-exaltation. To confirm his prohibition by a solemn oath showed Saul to be both rash and profane. The very words of the curse give evidence that Saul's zeal was for himself, and not for the honor of God.

18) What effect did the decree have on Saul's army?

1 Samuel 14:32-33 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 _____.

The prohibition resulted in leading the people to transgress the command of God. They had been engaged in warfare all day and were faint for want of food; and as soon as the hours of restriction were over, they fell upon the spoil and devoured the flesh with the blood, thus violating the law that forbade the eating of blood.



19) Who else got caught up in the decree?

1 Samuel 14:27 But Jonathan heard _____ 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 _____.

During the day's battle Jonathan, who had not heard of the king's command, unwittingly offended by eating a little honey as he passed through a wood. Saul learned of this at evening. He had declared that the violation of his edict should be punished with death; and though Jonathan had not been guilty of a willful sin, though God had miraculously preserved his life and had wrought deliverance through him, the king declared that the sentence must be executed. To spare the life of his son would have been an acknowledgment on the part of Saul that he had sinned in making so rash a vow.

20) What did Saul decree against his own son?

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

Saul could not claim the honor of the victory, but he hoped to be honored for his zeal in maintaining the sacredness of his oath. Even at the sacrifice of his son, he would impress upon his subjects the fact that the royal authority must be maintained. At Gilgal, but a short time before, Saul had presumed to officiate as priest, contrary to the command of God. When reproved by Samuel, he had stubbornly justified himself. Now, when his own command was disobeyed, though the command was unreasonable and had been violated through ignorance, the king and father sentenced his son to death.

21) Did the people listen?

1 Samuel 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 _____ of his head fall to the ground; for he hath wrought with God this day. So the people rescued Jonathan, that he died not.

Saul could not but feel that his son was preferred before him, both by the people and by the Lord. Jonathan's deliverance was a severe reproof to the king's rashness. He felt a presentiment that his curses would return upon his own head. He did not longer continue the war with the Philistines, but returned to his home, moody and dissatisfied.

22) What did Jesus tell us?

Matthew 7:2 For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be _____: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

Those who are most ready to excuse or justify themselves in sin are often most severe in judging and condemning others. Many, like Saul, bring upon themselves the displeasure of God, but they reject counsel and despise reproof. Even when convinced that the Lord is not with them, they refuse to see in themselves the cause of their trouble.

The Lord bears long with the waywardness of men, and to all He grants opportunity to see and forsake their sins; but while He may seem to prosper those who disregard His will and despise His warnings, He will, in His own time, surely make manifest their folly.

Can you see that God will test your character?

Would you like God to fight the battle for you?

When is it time to humble yourself before the LORD?