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That Didn't Take Long

I Samuel 13

Intro: Whether its driving too fast on a rainy day or walking while texting, we are constantly being made aware of this truth: if you do not keep your wits about you, disaster can come so suddenly. This same truth is brought out in **ch13**. If you were rooting 4 Israel's new monarchy then **ch12** probably let a little wind out of your sails but at least it left us with a guarded hope: Israel's seen her sin & Samuel's committed 2 praying 4 & teaching them the good & right way. Maybe something decent will come from Saul's reign! Well, prepare yourselves 4 a dismal story of royal failure & the utter helplessness of **YHWH's** people. Of course, the story flows into **ch14** but there's enough in our passage today 2 give us pause 4 earnest thought & enable us 2 put into proper context the excitement that will quickly follow after.

1-2- 2 yrs- Not given any info on 1st 2 yrs of Saul's reign; apparently uneventful (after the victory at Jabesh-Gilead). During that time, 4 the 1st time in Israel's history, Saul creates a professional standing army. Every battle b/4 this was fought by a militia that was called up in times of national emergencies. They're only 3K, but they're a real army.

Jonathan- 1st mention in scripture. We'll find out in **14:1**, that he is also Saul's son. Jonathan will become a prominent & refreshing part of **I Sam**, displaying 1 of the most amiable, loyal & faithful characters in the entire Bible. His great faith in **YHWH** contrasts directly w/ Saul's non-existent faith. His love 4 Israel & willingness 2 sacrifice himself 4 her good is contrasted w/ Saul's inherent selfishness & insecurity in the face of someone else's success. We don't have 2 wait long 4 these contrasts 2/b revealed – we're going 2 see them begin 2 surface in the very next verse.

3-4- attacked- Hurray! The Philistine garrison in Geba has been attacked & defeated. Nothing disturbing about that at all, at least not until the Philistines hear about it! But notice who the **instigator** of this victory is: **Jonathan** (not Saul). Why didn't Saul take the initiative & attack the garrison at Geba? He had twice the men that Jonathan had. Why didn't the king go out b/4 Israel? Of course, when the newspapers came out, Saul got all the credit but he didn't really do any of the work. Does Jonathan's success point 2 some **lack/deficiency** in Saul? **Ch14** will answer but 1st let's note how **God's purposes are not frustrated when His more "authorized" servants prove hesitant, He has others willing 2 trust in His power.** If we compare **10:5-7**, it appears Saul was suppose 2 attack that garrison yrs earlier; but he didn't do it then & was still reluctant 2 do it here. Jonathan steps in w/ half the resources & gets the job done. George Whitefield is credited w/ being the driving force behind the Great Awakening that swept through England & America in the late 18th century. He preach 2 massive crowds where he could find a large enough area 4 them 2 gather. Here's the thing – there probably would have been no need 4 his wild practice of preaching in the open fields if the Anglicans & Protestants had been preaching the same gospel in their church buildings. Chuck Smith wouldn't have needed 2 spearhead the Jesus movement of the '60s if every church had opened their doors 2 the hippies, druggies & all the wayward youth of the day. God Used George Whitefield & He used Chuck Smith b/c they made themselves available 2/b used by Him. They rejected the urge 2 maintain the status quo & launched out in faith.

abomination- there something else going on here: what did Jonathan's victory actually do? Did the Philistines tuck tail & run home? All he succeeded in doing was **waking a sleeping giant!** But its a giant that needed 2/b awakened! See, Israel was only enjoying the "peace" of a subjugated people: **everything w/b fine as long as you take your place of subjugation.** By this attack, Jonathan is saying, **"Israel won't be subjected 2 you any longer!"** He's stirring the political pot here. As long as the Israelites stayed in their weak, defeated "place" the Philistines gave them no problems, "Those Jews are great guys!" But as soon as the Israelites show some boldness in the Lord & are willing 2 bring the fight 2 **YHWH's** enemies, then the Philistines consider them an abomination (4 **standing up 4 themselves**).

This principle has a spiritual parallel in our lives today. Now, we don't fight against the Philistine army. **Eph 6:12** reveals our true enemies & they have the same attitude as the Philistines. As long as we are weak & subjected 2 our spiritual enemies, they don't mind us at all. But as soon as we begin 2 show some boldness in the Lord & are willing 2 engage in battle against the Lord's enemies, our spiritual foes consider us an abomination & we become their new favorite target. **Why bother?** B/c if **peace w/ Satan** is more important than **victory in the Lord= defeated & subjected!** Jonathan's willing 2 stir up this hornet's nest b/c this is a situation that cannot continue 2 exist 4 **YHWH's** people. God's desire is not 4 His people 2 live w/ their heads down in subjection 2 the forces of evil, afraid 2 draw fire but 2 walk in confident faith, trusting in Him 2 not only bring the victory but provide deliverance & protection every day. As soon as you step out in faith, Satan will attack but don't look at the enemy, look 2 the 1 who gives the victory. The more faithful you follow the Lord, the more desperate Satan's attack w/b & the more glorious God's deliverance w/b.

Greg Laurie has been conducting Harvest Crusades in So Cal since 1990, collectively sharing the gospel w/ millions of people & leading hundreds of thousands 2 Christ. After 25 yrs you'd expect him 2 start chilling out & toning down but not Greg. At 62, he's planning the largest evangelistic event in U.S. history – hosting a Harvest Crusade at AT&T Stadium in Arlington, TX. The Stadium normally seats 80K but can be expanded 2 seat 110K. Add 2 that the live streaming over the internet enabling churches around the world 2 host their own gatherings & the implications are astronomical. Obviously, this will open the door 4 spiritual attack but that's not reason 2 stop trusting, serving, going!

What about you, us? What is God calling us 2 do? What garrison of the kingdom of darkness needs 2/b attacked? It could be a personal stronghold in your life or a spiritual stronghold in our community or both! The only question is: will we say “let sleeping dogs lie” & continue 2 walk around in spiritual defeat & subjection? We certainly don’t have 2 We can walk in the faith of Saul & know only **defeat** or we can walk in the faith of Jonathan & know **warfare** & **victory!**

5-7- distressed- Boy, ain’t it great 2 have a king! This is the largest gathering of Philistines ever recorded in the Bible. It scared the people so much that some went into hiding & some just left the country, “**We’re outta here!**” These were difficult days, indeed; but even tho the Israelites were troubled by these circumstances, **YHWH** wasn’t. God wasn’t worried b/c all He needs is a Samuel standing on top of a hill, sacrificing a lamb & He will just shake the land w/ thunder & put the army of the enemy 2 flight (**ch7**). The days that we live in are difficult & growing more so everyday, but God is never troubled by the odds or the circumstances – the only thing that troubles God is the unbelief of His own people. That’s the only thing that will disrupt His plans – but not 4 long. All He needs is 1 faithful servant.

8-10- Bring- Difficulties don’t necessarily build character but they always reveal the character we already possess. There’s no question Saul was under a tremendous amount of pressure here but his response reveals a deficiency: he lacks the will 2 obey **YHWH**. What ever way you look at it, Saul was supposed 2 wait 4 Samuel 2 show up so he could give Saul instructions on how 2 conduct the battle. He waited until the 7th day – but not the whole day. What’s the big deal? **God’s prophet** was 2 give him **God’s guidance** 4 the war w/ the Philistines. Samuel was the bearer of God’s word & Saul’s job was 2 wait 4 it. But Saul didn’t. He proceeded w/o it b/c in his mind, **sacrificial ritual** was **essential** but **prophetic direction** was **optional**. This was an act of **insubordination**, a failure 2 submit 2 **YHWH**’s word thru His prophet. By his action, Saul reveals his belief that certain **emergencies** rendered God’s word **unnecessary**. When times got tough, the monarchy could function on it own initiative. This is nothing but pride. This was also an act of **superstition**, no different than Israel taking the ark into battle hoping 2 force **YHWH**’s hand.

11-12- I saw- If Saul’s actions weren’t bad enough, his response 2 Samuel’s question shows a blindness 2 his sin. Saul offers 5 excuses: the **people**, **Samuel**, the **Philistines**, no **sacrifice**, his own **feelings** (**compelled= forced**). Thru it all, there’s no inclination of **remorse** or **repentance** 4 His sinful action (**I threw the gold in the fire & this calf came out**). Saul becomes a man of excuses, unable or unwilling 2 see his sin from God’s perspective, thru God’s eyes.

13-14- not kept- Samuel’s response, “**How could you be so stupid 2 not keep the Lord’s command?**” No future in Christian counseling 4 Sam! Actually, Samuel took the only course on Christian counseling that really matters: you messed up b/c you didn’t obey God’s word. You can wrap up every counseling session in those 2 statements. Jesus gave us the simple response 2 every unbelievers argument: “**You are mistaken not knowing the scriptures nor the power of God.**” (**Mt 22:29**). Here, Samuel gives us the answer 2 every sinful dilemma a believer may be found in: “You messed up b/c you failed 2 obey the scriptures.” If you’re going 2 use these, you better know & obey the Word!

Despite his proud & superstitious behavior, Samuel mainly charges Saul w/ **disobedience** 2 **YHWH**! B/c of this Saul would not establish an ongoing dynasty. God doesn’t reject Saul here, just tells him he’ll be the last of his family. Why? B/c **YHWH** desires 2 give Israel a king who is a man after God’s own heart. Saul’s problem was he was a man after Israel’s heart. He was all about image & prestige & the things men look at as being admirable. But none of those things helped keep Israel safe, free or committed 2 her covenant God. **YHWH** desired 2 give Israel a king that was nothing like Saul; a king that would **honor YHWH**, see Him as the **true king** of Israel; a king who had a **soft, repentant heart** & truly **loved others**. Who is this? David, who’s probably not even born yet but God’s waiting 4 him 2 come on the scene. It will still be some 20 yrs from this time b/4 Samuel will anoint David as king.

15-21- went up- the hits just keep on coming! Philistine raiding parting move at will across the land, stealing supplies 4 their army from the Israelites. Saul’s army is reduced to 600. Not only did Saul lack men, the men he had lacked equipment! The Philistines had deported all the blacksmiths from Israel so the Jews couldn’t make weapons or even repair their farm implements. But none of these are as tragic as the statement hidden in **vs15a, Samuel arose & went up from Gilgal**. It’s the worst of Saul’s liabilities, the fact that he now faced all of these difficulties w/o the guidance of **YHWH** thru His prophet. 2 lose the direction of God’s Word is 2/b truly poor & open 2 destruction (**Ps 119:105**). It’s 1 thing 2/b in terrible distress, but quite another 2/b **alone** in that distress. Saul had isolated himself from what he needed most: the word of God 4 his way! He can number his troops but that’s all he can do b/c he has lost what matters most. Saul is on his own & no matter whether he’s terrified or not, that’s a danger place 2/b.

The Israelite army was small in number & short on supplies but they had a great God, if only they would trust Him! And yet, all of these shortcomings merely set the stage 4 Jonathan’s thrilling victory in **ch14**. God’s desire 4 His people is 2 follow Jonathan’s example faith & step out in faith & trust Him 2 provide the results. The reality is that, 4 the most part, the Body of Christ today mostly resembles Saul’s army & if it does – it’s our own fault! Jesus defeated the powers of darkness thru His work on the cross & His power is available 2 His people today. We have all the armor & weapons we’ll ever need & His Word reveals 2 us the strategy of our enemy as well as all the spiritual resources we have in Christ. All He asks is that we trust Him, obey His commands & He will help us win the battle.

Are we willing 2 trust & obey God in every area of our lives? Willing 2 “**be strong in the Lord & in the power of His**

might" (Eph 6:10)? Ultimately, the battle is the Lord's & He will give us the victory in it if we're willing 2 fight the battle as He prescribes, not as we see fit. 😊