
Day 88 - March 29

Israel as a Monarchy (1100 – 930 BCE)

The Reign of Saul

Reading: *1 Samuel 13:1; 14:49-51; 1 Chronicles 9:35-44; 1 Samuel 13:2-14:45*

Reflections:

- The record keeping of families shows the importance of inheritance within a culture that is based on that way of passing down land and wealth. It reminds us that God has fostered within Israel the importance of inheritance and family lineage so that when Jesus comes we learn the lesson that when we are adopted into his family, we have the rights and inheritance of being God's children.
- The story of Saul starts off with his failure right away. The way the text reads you would think that his kingdom was very short in its reign. There is evidence to suggest that it may have only been two years in length rather than forty two years.
- Saul is impatient and does not wait on God. He takes matters into his own hands. Now, we should note that God is not hung up on rules as we will see with David. For example, David takes the show bread for his men and that is okay with God. God knows Saul's heart and he was obviously responding from all of the fear of his men, rather than out of a heart for God. If Saul's heart would have been right, in this case, he would have honored the command of God.
- Samuel's statement against Saul sets the stage for David. Key statement: "You have acted foolishly," Samuel said. "You have not kept the command the Lord your God gave to you; if you had, he would have established your kingdom over Israel for all time. But now your kingdom will not endure; the Lord has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him leader of his people, because you have not kept the Lord's command."
- Saul counting his men right after this decision by God seems like his feeble attempt to figure out how much human strength he had still with him. It is like he is asking, "Who is still with me now?"
- The Philistine strategy of making sure they had all the good weapons of warfare is an interesting note. On the human side, it shows how the enemies of Israel were more

shrewd than Israel. It reminds us though that victory rests with God alone. Jonathan declared and rightly so, "Nothing can hinder the Lord from saving, whether by many or by few."

- The armor bearer's loyalty is the first mention of deep love and loyalty we see in the text since the time of Ruth. There is something about Jonathan that he is this kind of man. His armor bearer says, "Go ahead. I am with you, heart and soul." In time we will see that Jonathan and David will have this kind of deep and profound love and loyalty to one another.
- Jonathan's victory with his armor bearer must be viewed as almost a parallel to David and Goliath. They mock Jonathan and yet Jonathan has a decisive victory against incredible odds.
- God uses fear or panic to send the enemy into confusion. Again we see that it is God who deals with our enemies. He is our warrior and defender. The Philistines end up attacking themselves with their own swords. What irony! It shows God's power to turn our enemies against each other.
- The oath of Saul to withhold food from his army shows this super-spirituality that leads to a harsh treatment of the body. It reveals how binding ourselves under law and strict treatment of the body does not actually honor God in every occasion. Jonathan as his son unknowingly does not keep this law (he doesn't dishonor his father) and learns that his body needs that energy from eating, especially the sweet honey. His eyes brightened means he was re-energized for the battle. God is revealing here how Saul is missing the point. At first he disregards the command of God out of fear of his men leaving him. Now he treats his men harshly by enforcing a law that is supposed to honor God but in the end once again misses God's heart. This same complete misunderstanding of God's heart is taken to another level with Saul. He then goes on to make another foolish vow that whoever has caused trouble should be put to death, even if it is his son. It turns out that it was his son (decided by taking lots) and Saul actually wants to kill his own son. You can see here how Saul completely fails to understand God's ways. It is the other men that save Jonathan on that day. Saul's foolishness is beginning to be revealed for how terrible it can be. We are challenged here to understand that it is God's heart that is most important. You can't really know how to apply the commands of God without first understanding the underlying principles and how they apply to serving his larger purposes, particularly as it relates to people experiencing his love and grace.