

1 Samuel 13:1-14:46 // Godly Leaders for God's People

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Preacher: Rt Rev Andy Lines

[0 : 00] So, as Martin said, this morning's reading starts on page 282. It differs slightly from what's in your prayer sheet.

We'll start at verse 8 and go through to 14, verse 23. Samuel is rebuking Saul, and we find him in Gilgal, verse 8.

He waited for seven days, the time set by Samuel. But Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and Saul's men began to scatter.

So he said, bring me the burnt offering and the fellowship offerings. And Saul offered up the burnt offering. Just as he finished making the offering, Samuel arrived, and Saul went out to greet him. What have you done? asked Samuel. Saul replied, when I saw that the men were scattering, and that you did not come at the set time, and that the Philistines were assembling at Michmash, I thought, now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the Lord's favor.

[1 : 14] So I felt compelled to offer the burnt offering. You've done a foolish thing, Samuel said. You've not kept the command the Lord your God gave 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 ruler of his people, because you have not kept the Lord's command.

Then Samuel left Gilgal and went up to Gibeah in Benjamin, and Saul counted the men who were with him. They numbered about 600. Saul and his son Jonathan and the men with them were staying in Gibeah of Benjamin while the Philistines camped at Michmash.

Raiding parties went out from the Philistine camp in three detachments. One turned towards Ophrah in the vicinity of Shoal, another towards Betharon, and the third towards the borderland overlooking the valley of Zebulim, facing the wilderness.

Now, not a blacksmith could be found in the whole land of Israel because the Philistines had said, otherwise, the Hebrews will make swords or spears.

[2 : 31] So all Israel went down to the Philistines to have their plowshares, mattocks, axes, and sickles sharpened. The price was two-thirds of a shekel for sharpening plowshares and mattocks, and a third of a shekel for sharpening forks and axes and for repointing goads.

So on the day of the battle, not a soldier with Saul and Jonathan had a sword or spear in his hand. Only Saul and his son Jonathan had them.

Now, a detachment of Philistines had gone out to the pass of Michmash. One day, Jonathan, son of Saul, said to his young armor-bearer, Come, let's go over to the Philistine outpost on the other side. But he did not tell his father. Saul was staying on the outskirts of Gibeah under a pomegranate tree in Migron. With him were about 600 men, among whom was Aijah, who was wearing an ephod.

He was a son of Ichabod's brother Aetob, son of Phinehas, the son of Eli, the Lord Priest in Shiloh. No one was aware that Jonathan had left. On each side of the pass that Jonathan intended to cross to reach the Philistine outpost was a cliff.

[3 : 48] One was called Bozes and the other Senna. One cliff stood to the north towards Michmash, the other to the south towards Geba. Jonathan said to his young armor-bearer, Come, let's go over to the outpost of those uncircumcised men.

Perhaps the Lord will act on our behalf. Nothing can hinder the Lord from saving, whether by many or by few. Do all that you have in mind, his armor-bearer said.

Go ahead. I am with you, heart and soul. Jonathan said, Come on then. We'll cross over towards them and let them see us. If they say to us, Wait there until we come to you, we'll stay where we are and not go up to them.

But if they say, Come up to us, we'll climb up, because that will be our sign that the Lord has given them into our hands. So both of them showed themselves to the Philistine outpost.

Look, said the Philistines, the Hebrews are crawling out of the holes they were hiding in. The men of the outpost shouted to Jonathan and his armor-bearer, Come up to us and we'll teach you a lesson.

[4 : 57] So Jonathan said to his armor-bearer, Climb up after me. The Lord has given them into the hand of Israel. Jonathan climbed up using his hands and feet with his armor-bearer right behind him.

The Philistines fell before Jonathan and his armor-bearer followed and killed behind him. In that first attack, Jonathan and his armor-bearer killed some twenty men in an area of about half an acre.

Then panic struck the whole army, those in the camp and field and those in the outposts and raiding parties, and the ground shook. It was a panic sent by God.

Saul's lookouts at Gibeah and Benjamin saw the army melting away in all directions. Then Saul said to the men who were with him, Muster the forces and see who has left us.

And when they did, it was Jonathan and his armor-bearer who were not there. Saul said to Aijah, Bring the ark of God. At that time it was with the Israelites.

[6 : 03] While Saul was talking to the priest, the tumult in the Philistine camp increased more and more. So Saul said to the priest, Withdraw your hand. Then Saul and all his men assembled and went to the battle, and they found the Philistines in total confusion, striking each other with their swords.

Those Hebrews who had previously been with the Philistines and had gone up with them to their camp went over to the Israelites who were with Saul and Jonathan. And when all the Israelites who had hidden in the hill country of Ephraim heard that the Philistines were on the run, they joined the battle in hot pursuit.

So on that day, the Lord saved Israel, and the battle moved on beyond Bethaven. This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God. Thank you very much indeed for reading God's Word.

It's a great joy to be back with you again, and let's pray to God as we come to His Word now. Let's pray. Your Word says that Your Word is the sword of the Spirit, and we pray that Your Holy Spirit would wield that sword in me and in each one of us today so that we go away changed and more in keeping with the person that You want us to be and the congregation You would have us be.

[7 : 41] For Jesus' sake, amen. As I say, it's great to be back amongst you again at St. Silas. I love being here.

I remember during the lockdown period accompanying you and your prayer meetings and sometimes your services online. I then paid a lightning visit here to ordain James Lapping with us all masked up.

And most recently I popped by with my wife at the beginning of the Scottish holidays and learned to discover just how much parking outside costs here.

Well, now schools have returned. I'm back again. And this evening, Lord willing, I'll be ordaining Jonathan as a presbyter or elder in the Church of God. And this kind of occasion rightly makes us think about the nature and type of leaders that God needs for His church.

And we'll be looking this evening with Jonathan's father actually at what the New Testament says about the characteristics of good godly leadership. But this morning we're going to focus on this Old Testament passage and we're going to encounter another Jonathan.

[8 : 59] And in order to distinguish them, I'm going to call one of them Jonathan M, as in Middleton. And the one in our passage is going to be Jonathan K, Jonathan son or rather grandson of Kish, so that we can distinguish between the two.

Now leadership, even as we prayed today, we were praying for the king, the prime minister, the first minister, and so on. Leadership, even in all those areas, is absolutely key.

And so this will have a relevance beyond the church which we are today, this morning at St. Silas.

Well, I'm reopening post-holidays, the series that you had been doing in 1 Samuel.

And way back at the end of June, when Jonathan M was preaching, he had the subject, the king, in the dock as he looked at chapter 12.

And in that, just as a brief way of reminder, the elderly prophet Samuel was stepping away from his ruling of Israel as judge.

[10:09] And he was doing so and reminding the Israelites of the model of leadership that he had given during his time as judge and that he had not taken anything that was improper for him to take.

He'd not abused his position. But his model had been one of selfless service. And he took the opportunity to remind them as instead of him, there was going to be the king that they had chosen, that though they had rebelliously demanded to have a king like the other nations, the Lord in his gracious goodness had granted them a king.

But he also says there are going to be some dangers inherent in having a king. And Jonathan M referred to those with the words, the big if.

Listen to these words from chapter 12. If you fear the Lord and serve and obey him and do not rebel against his commands, and if both you and the king who reigns over you follow the Lord your God, good.

But if you do not obey the Lord and if you rebel against his commands, his hand will be against you as it was against your ancestors.

[11:32] Moreover, Samuel committed himself to the ministry of prayer for the people and the word of God on behalf of the people and their king. So the big if was to temper expectations and the exuberant optimism that sometimes you begin when you have a new regime, as we do as a country, have a new regime in many ways.

And as the Scottish election next year will show, there's a possibility of change even then. But it infuses us with a healthy dose of optimism, not optimism, based on past experience.

Well, we're now looking at chapters 13 and 14, where we will get to see how the king that they had been given performs against the criteria set out for good godly leadership.

Will he be sure to fear the Lord and to serve him and to obey him faithfully with all his heart?

So the Old Testament passage this morning deals with very similar issues of what comprises good godly leadership of God's people, just as we'll be considering this evening.

[12:49] Well, the verses that were not read just now are from 1 to 7, and they can be really summarized as sort of the beginning of Saul's reign over the people of Israel.

He reigned for some 40 years, it's estimated. And his reign, like before him, was featured, characterized by the Philistine threat.

The Philistines were a people who'd settled along the coastal region, in land that God had promised to his people Israel. And they were now encroaching further inland, and this was bringing them further into conflict with the people of Israel.

So we begin with a small force. And those early verses just tell us, really, what a difficult position Israel was in. They were in a situation, they were told in verse 6, that was critical, and their army was hard-pressed.

So that gives you a flavor of the verses that come immediately prior to the verses 8 and following that we have in our passage. And these verses 8, particularly to 15, are a critical part of the passage, and indeed of Saul's whole reign.

[14:15] For we will see how Saul responds, and how that was viewed by God. So there's a critical situation. How is Saul going to respond to that?

And how does God view his response? And we'll see that as Samuel makes a brief reappearance. So in order to grasp the story that was read to us, we need to turn back briefly to page 279280, in 1 Samuel chapter 10.

And this happens just after the anointing of Saul as king by Samuel. And in verse 5 of chapter 10, Samuel has referred to Saul encountering a Philistine outpost at Gibeah, of the Spirit of the Lord coming powerfully upon him, that's Saul.

And then the instruction in verse 8 is this, Go down ahead of me to Gilgal. I will surely come down to you to sacrifice burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, but you must wait seven days until I come to you and tell you what you are to do.

Now, back in our passage, chapter 13, we come to the fulfillment of that instruction. Saul, we're told, has waited, verse 8, seven days, the time set by Samuel.

[15 : 47] But Samuel was still missing. He hadn't turned up. And what's happening? Well, in their fear and trembling, the Israelites are bleeding troops, some of them disappearing into the caves.

Others have even crossed over the River Jordan to the east to the relative safety there. So what is Paul going to do in this critical moment?

Verse 9, he offered the burnt offering that we're told in chapter 10 was what Samuel was going to come and do. And the Lord in his wisdom doesn't combine everything into one person, all the responsibilities and gifts.

As in the people of God today, we all have different gifts to bring and to put at God's disposal. Whatever we think of it, what Saul did in having the burnt offering is immediately followed in verse 9, that Samuel appears.

And he asks, And he asks, Saul, what have you done? And Saul, in verses 11 to 12, gives his rationale for what he had done.

[17 : 00] The people were disappearing. You, Samuel, didn't turn up in the time you said you would. The Philistines, the Philistines, by contrast, have come.

They're very present. And I, Saul, needed and have not asked for the Lord's favor. So we read, he had felt compelled to offer the burnt offering.

Now we might have a degree of sympathy for Saul. He had waited the seven days, and Samuel hadn't turned up. Well, you will see in chapter 14, how Jonathan K, Saul's son, answers a similarly direct question.

Tell me what you have done. 14, 43. But here, Saul gives an answer, which is all about other people.

Do you see, if you look at it, he said he'd been forced to act, perhaps suggesting that this was against, his better judgment. And it was the fault of the people.

[18 : 08] It was the fault of Samuel for not turning up on time, of the Philistines for being there in the first place, and underlying that, a grumbling at God himself.

And that is what had put them in this panicky, trembling situation. But Moses had taught his people Israel in Deuteronomy, that the king that was going to rule over the people of Israel should take great care to follow and to read the law of the Lord, and to follow carefully all the words of this law and those decrees, and not to consider himself somehow above the law.

It says in Deuteronomy 17, verse 20, and not consider himself, that's the king, better than his fellow Israelites, and turn from the law to the right or to the left.

If that had happened, he would have reigned with his descendants a long time. Well, there's a clear indication there, isn't there, of the indictment of what Saul had done.

Back in 1 Samuel 13, Samuel's response on behalf of God as God's prophet is a devastating indictment of what God thought of what Saul had done in taking matters into his own hands.

[19 : 35] Verse 13, you have done a foolish thing. Morally as well as intellectually wrong, Samuel said, you have not kept the command the Lord your God gave 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 ruler of his people because you have not kept, repeat, the Lord's command.

So Saul's guilt is his disobedience of the Lord's command and what that shows of the underlying attitude of Saul's heart towards God.

Just like the other Israelites who had sought a king to be like other nations to fend off the Philistines, Saul was just like that.

He was not a man after God's own heart. And it is so easy for us as God's people to do the same as Saul did, to take a shortcut or to rationalize our disobedience and blame others as Saul did or to excuse ourselves with some religious traditional practice as Saul did.

[20 : 55] And this was a fateful moment for Saul because yes, he's going to go on reigning and you're going to keep studying him and he was going to have some successes as you'll see at the beginning of next week's passage.

But his kingdom would not endure. Instead, our hopes as readers are projected forwards and are placed on someone else.

A man, we're told, after his own heart. One chosen by God for his purposes who would do all that he told them. This is referring to the successor of Saul, a man called David.

This is the first reference to him who is described by the Apostle Paul in Acts 13. God testified concerning him, I have found David, son of Jesse, a man after my own heart. He will do everything I want him to do. And David from now on, although Saul continues to reign until the end of 1 Samuel, David takes a greater and greater place.

[22 : 02] But, as you will no doubt know, he also got into trouble many times and he also disobeyed God. But in God's great goodness and mercy, his kingdom did endure.

For we're told in Acts 13, from this man, from David's descendants, God has brought to Israel the Savior, Jesus, as he promised.

Great David's greater son was the one to whom this is all pointing. Well, after Samuel declares sentence on Saul for his disobedience in verse 15, in the Greek original version, he leaves Saul with his dwindling force, melting away from panic.

Saul is now without access, it seems, to the word of God through the prophet. Samuel has departed and the rest of chapter 13 underlines the further weakness of Saul's position and that of the Israelites.

We saw it in the reading. Three Philistine raids, bands are spreading out all over the land. There are no blacksmiths available to construct weapons for the Israelites.

[23 : 20] They only have limited access even to the Philistines. They're very enemies for basic chores of tool sharpening so that they could go about agriculture.

But in doing so, they have to pay the Philistines for the privilege, who therefore go about exploiting their monopoly of blacksmiths. And we finish chapter 13 with only Saul and Jonathan Kaye, as we're told, equipped with even the basic necessities to fight the Philistines.

And that is the context of the day of battle. And we now have some understanding as to what's going on here. But let's dip briefly into chapter 14 and the details of the day of battle that was read for us, making a contrast now between Saul and his son, Jonathan Kaye.

Jonathan seems to be so much the king that Saul should have been, but wasn't. And it's interesting to, in speaking of Jonathan's positive leadership credentials, comparing that with what is required and what we'll be reading through this evening of Jonathan M as he is considered and recognized as a leader amongst God's people.

Well, let's walk through briefly what it says in chapter 14. Despite the weakness of the Israelites, Jonathan Kaye, plus his armor bearer, with, if you remember, one sword between the two of them, verse 1, despite the difficulty of the terrain, the cliffs are named thorny and slippery.

[25 : 02] That's the name, the meaning of the two words there, of the cliffs, the crags, that they had to scale, emphasizing, as it does in verse 4, the difficulty. While Saul, with his larger detachment, is literally left sitting under a pomegranate tree in verse 2 of chapter 14.

Saul has at his side, as well as his army, he has the priest, a hija, who is descended from the very priesthood who had been rejected earlier in 1 Samuel, the family of Eli, the cousin of Ichabod, so named because the glory departed Israel with the capture of the ark of God in 1 Samuel 4.

So Jonathan, by comparison, has almost no one with him, just the armor bearer, and he still takes the initiative. Then we move on. Jonathan knows and trusts his God and God's commitment to his own people.

Look with me at this beautiful verse 6. Jonathan Kay says to his young armor bearer, come, let's go over to the outpost of these uncircumcised men.

Perhaps the Lord will act on our behalf. Nothing can hinder the Lord from saving, whether by many or by few. And having taken the initiative on the basis that these are God's enemies and therefore he's going to do something there, he doesn't presume about the way that God should do it.

[26 : 37] As we so often do in our prayers, we can kind of dictate how God has got to answer us. No, he is humble. He is confident in God's ability and his commitment to his people.

And he's confident that God can overcome any obstacles such as we have seen that they faced. In whatever way he chooses, with or without human agency.

What a fabulous verse to instruct us as to how to approach our wonderful God. And the result, verse 14, is 20-0 in favor of Jonathan Kay and the armor bearer, and of course God.

Because in verse 15, it says that the panic that ensued amongst the Philistines, caused not by Jonathan and his armor bearer, of course not, but by God.

And it affected everyone. That same word, quaking or trembling or panic, is used way back in chapter 13 that we've looked at, verse 7.

[27 : 41] And that was caused by Saul, caused by the Philistines. But here it is God who is stirring up and getting the Philistine army to quake.

Saul, by contrast, verses 16 to 22, is reactive. He's taken by surprise. He doesn't know about Jonathan's absence. He sees the growing carnage in the Philistine army and seeks to join in. But the Philistines, who are the only ones, of course, who have swords, turn those very swords on each other. It can only be of God, can't it? Added to this are the Israelite mercenaries who had worked for the Philistines and were fighting on their side, who see the way things are going and turn their swords on their own masters.

And even the ones who had fled or hidden in the caves appear now to be on the winning side. And in verse 23, the last verse that we read in our reading, we hear that the Lord, in summary, saved Israel on that day, acting mainly through Jonathan rather than Saul.

But it, as we've seen, doesn't depend on the numbers or necessarily the obedience of God's people. He will do what he does if he wants to do that.

[29 : 05] The Lord is not hindered by numbers nor even the sinfulness of his chosen leaders. Well, in the church, we are often, we can be reminded of the ineffectiveness or the unworthiness of the ministers.

And to a degree, we're going to recognize that with Jonathan M. this evening. But in our Anglican church, our understanding is that the ministry is not rendered ineffectual by the unworthiness of the minister.

That's not something we should aim at. But it is a great encouragement to those of us who are very aware of our failing. Well, from verse 24 onwards, which we didn't read, let me just summarize these very quickly.

This is kind of the mopping up or operation after the battle that had been won, as we've seen, by the Lord. And it contains further contrasts between the leadership of Saul and Jonathan Kaye.

The Israelites, we're told in verse 24, are in great distress again. The same word is used as hard press back in chapter 13. But now it's not the Philistines who are the cause.

[30 : 22] It's actually caused by Saul himself. He just seems to go from bad to worse. How had he caused a problem? He'd bound the people under oath not to eat anything during the day of battle until the evening.

Probably he had nice motives, but we're told here that he wanted to be avenged on his enemies, which suggests a degree of selfishness at least involved there.

And the result is that the Hebrew army becomes so hungry by the end of the day of hard exercise in difficult terrain, that they are fainting and weak, as I could tell you I will be if I don't eat anything before this evening's service.

Well, Saul sets an oath upon the people of Israel not to eat, but Jonathan, his son, doesn't know about that and he dips his stick and has some honey and we're told in verse 27, his eyes brightened.

He was rejuvenated by the sugar rush, as probably you will know that can happen if you have a degree of sugar when you're in great need.

[31 : 37] Well, this sugar rush leads people to point out to Jonathan that the oath that they were all under not to eat anything that day.

And Jonathan says in verse 28, my father has made trouble for the country. See how my eyes brightened when I tasted a little of this honey. How much better it would have been if the men had eaten today some of the plunder they took from their enemies.

Would not the slaughter of the Philistines have been even greater? Well, this is an echo. The word trouble is an echo of an earlier battle during the Joshua chapter 7 when the Israelites were taking the land.

But they lost a battle and the reason was because someone had sinned against the Lord, a man by the name of Achan. And he was accused of bringing trouble on the people of Israel and he was eventually killed and buried and they called that the Valley of Achor, the Valley of Trouble.

So like Achan, Saul has brought trouble instead of joy to the people of God. and we're told they were exhausted and so on.

[32 : 51] Now Saul's unnecessary oath results in something that's even worse and that is that the Israelites in their desperation then catch all the plunder from the enemy and they eat meat with the blood still in it which is against the law of the Lord and it ends up with Saul having to set up an altar,

a stone upon which they can then kill them because they had sinned.

And Saul sees that as their problem. They have proved faithless and he has to resolve it. But actually it was all down to his imposing this rule of no eating on an army that needed all the energy it could have.

Reminds us, doesn't it, of what Isaiah says and is quoted by Jesus. These people, honor me with their lips, and their hearts are far from me.

They worship me in vain. Their teachings are merely human rules. That's what Saul had imposed upon the Israelites. Well finally, verse 36, Saul issues the order to exploit the victory to its fullest extent but then pauses to seek the input of a priest.

but God doesn't answer in that day. And when eventually they find out that it was Jonathan who had eaten the honey, he owns up straight away and says, yes, I tasted a little honey with the end of my staff and now I must die according to your will, Saul, my dad.

[34 : 31] Well, Saul determines to carry it out and Jonathan has to be saved by his own army. He said, this is crazy. This is the man that God used to win the battle for us today. Why are we talking about killing him?

And they ransom him. They literally pay a ransom to save him from Saul's oath. Well, as we conclude, what are we to learn from this little chapter?

These two not so little chapters actually. Well, one, in the context of Jonathan M's ordination tonight, we need to consider carefully the lessons about leadership within the Lord's people under the Lord Jesus Christ, our chief shepherd.

The New Testament emphasizes the importance of good, godly leadership and the danger that bad leadership is to all the people of God. Although Saul, sorry, although God can work in spite of our failures, Saul demonstrates what damage can be done whilst Jonathan, Kish, demonstrates what could be done.

Secondly, the weaknesses of leadership will be shown under pressure. That was my experience in particularly my army days but it's still true today that when you're under pressure, that's when we will see what's really going on in people's lives and hearts.

[35 : 52] Saul, under pressure, took things into his own hands and ignored the word of God. Now, he could still have thrown himself on this merciful God and possibly receive forgiveness albeit with consequences but he chose rather to blame those around him.

So easy for us to do that. Thirdly, Saul, the intricacies of religion, of man-made ritual, were more important than obedience to God's word.

Honoring with lips is not a substitute for our hearts being close to God and David and supremely the Lord Jesus Christ would do everything God wanted them to do.

Let's learn from Jonathan Kaye's example. Trusting in God, knowing that he couldn't presume how God was going to act but being humble and prayerful and yet forceful in the face of great opposition, utterly confident that God can save by many or by few.

Well, let's not forget that God still uses weak and feeble people like you and me. He continued to work in and through Saul and Saul had many victories in the remainder of his reign even though from this moment onwards it's doomed to a finish.

[37 : 21] Jonathan Kaye, who in many ways is the leader that we should be looking to, always did so knowing that actually his life was going to end, his family's lives were going to end, he was not going to be the king that God wanted, it was going to go to the son of Jesse and his, that son of Jesse, David, would take center stage and in that way Jonathan is a little bit like John the Baptist who said, he, Jesus, must become greater and I must become less.

Are we ready to be little, small, and yet used in the Lord's service as we begin this new year?

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.■ Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen.