

- INTRODUCTION

- Self, Series, Selection

- CONTEXT

- Saul has had a lackluster run as king. His highlights thus far:
 - He was very tall...
 - He was not the good herdsman...
 - He prophesied once...
 - He is mildly cowardly...
 - He had a moderate military victory against the Ammonites...
 - A mediocre start to be sure...
- Last we saw Saul, he was busy making excuses for why he ***needed*** to **transgress the commandment of Lord...** because *seriously bro, this situation was different. I had to do it because of reasons.*
 - And Samuel informs him that because of his unrepentant impatience and disobedience he has now forfeited the monarchy.
 - Although that ultimately leads to a good king in King DAVID... There is an element of tragedy here for his son Jonathan, who we will see today, was filled with kingly virtue.
- Saul's shenanigans from last week reveal part of Saul's great failing was putting his hopes in the sacrificial ritual itself and not the God who instituted the sacrifice.
 - Saul was looking to the religious act as a means of currying God's favor...
- At the end of chapter 13, Israel remains under Philistine oppression. Saul's efforts to counter them have yielded limited success. The Israelites primarily resort to guerilla tactics and raids from secure locations within the land's topography.
 - Now... from a worldly perspective this makes sense... They are under-equipped and under manned.
 - And the Philistine garrison has taken a strategically vital pass in the rocky terrain around a place called Michmash.
 - This is where we pick up the story and where we will see the difference between Saul's desperate ritualism... his legalism... and his son Jonathan's courageous faith.
- Here in Chapter 14 the oppressors of God's people are defeated, and although Saul is the king, Jonathan is the real deliverer, of the people of Israel.
 - The contrast of the two characters and their actions actually clarifies the main point of the passage:
 - In the Kingdom of God, bold faith triumphs over arrogant legalism. (REPEAT)
 - As good protestants who believe that justification is by grace through faith and not the works of the law we all high-five Martin Luther and pound our bibles and say Amen...
 - No one in this room would consider themselves a legalist...
 - We are quick to scorn the disgraced Saul and applaud the noble Jonathan
 - And certainly the text gives us license to do so.
 - But do not be too quick to identify with Jonathan, though he is a model of Christian sonship...
 - There is lurking in all of us something of a Saul... and we would be foolish to not recognize it... and even more foolish not to repent of it... and even more foolish not to crucify it day by day.
 - So how does bold faith triumph over legalism, both in this story and in our own lives? First

- Point 1: Bold faith confounds the enemy.

- 1 Samuel 14: 1, 4a, 6-14

14 That same day Saul's son Jonathan said to the attendant who carried his weapons, "Come on, let's cross over to the Philistine garrison on the other side." However, he did not tell his father... 4 There were sharp columns[b] of rock on both sides of the pass that Jonathan intended to cross to reach the Philistine garrison... 6 Jonathan said to the attendant who carried his weapons, "Come on, let's cross over to the garrison of these uncircumcised men. Perhaps the Lord will help us. Nothing can keep the Lord from saving, whether by many or by few." 7 His armor-bearer responded, "Do what is in your heart. Go ahead! I'm completely with you." 8 "All right," Jonathan replied, "we'll cross over to the men and then let them see us. 9 If they say, 'Wait until we reach you,' then we will stay where we are and not go up to them. 10 But if they say, 'Come on up,' then we'll go up, because the Lord has handed them over to us—that will be our sign." 11 They let themselves be seen by the Philistine garrison, and the Philistines said, "Look, the Hebrews are coming out of the holes where they've been hiding!" 12 The men of the garrison called to Jonathan and his armor-bearer. "Come on up, and we'll teach you a lesson!" they said. "Follow me," Jonathan told his armor-bearer, "for the Lord has handed them over to Israel." 13 Jonathan climbed up using his hands and feet, with his armor-bearer behind him. Jonathan cut them down, and his armor-bearer followed and finished them off. 14 In that first assault Jonathan and his armor-bearer struck down about twenty men in a half-acre field.

- What a story right?

- A daring raid by two impetuous youths.

- They head down into the canyon below the Philistines, right down into what could easily be called the kill zone. The Philistines could simply shoot arrows, throw spears, or roll rocks down on them to kill them. But despite this they make sure they are seen...

- And this boldness seems to dismantle the enemy's sense of self-preservation.

- Maybe they thought Jonathan and the armor bearer were cowardly deserters...

- Maybe they just thought it would be more fun to watch these two get killed close up...

- But they certainly had no fear of the two of them... they even gave them safe passage while climbing up the rocky incline to the watchmen's camp.

- And in a blink of an eye... rather than two quickly dispatched Israelites... an entire watchman's outpost, nearly two dozen Philistines, lay dead...

- Movies are made about missions like this.

- And what inspired this special operation?

- It wasn't it some new piece of military intelligence or divine revelation that had come in.

- It wasn't as if Jonathan had received a message that the Philistines were manning this particular station with the dummies of the army...

- No... Look what it says in verse 6...

- "...Come on, let's cross over to the garrison of these uncircumcised men. *Perhaps* the Lord will help us. Nothing can keep the Lord from saving, whether by many or by few..."

- It was faith...

- ...Faith that the God of Israel was all that He claimed to be and would do all that he said he would...

- This word "perhaps" is not a word of certainty or arrogance, it is a word of hope...

- Jonathan was convinced that not only was he engaged in a physical war, he was engaged in a spiritual battle against those powers and principalities that defied Yahweh ...

- and that those powers, however seemingly powerful, COULD NOT PREVAIL against the one true God ...

- By identifying them as "uncircumcised men" he is pointing out that they are not only in opposition to the people of Israel but to the GOD of Israel...

- This account has echoes of what will happen just 3 chapters from now... when another impetuous young man confronts another superior Philistine fighting force who are stationed on

another hill... all while pointing out their defiance to the living God as evidenced by their uncircumcision...

- That young man will also be shockingly successful in his confrontation as well.
 - There is a reason that such a deep bond will form between David and Jonathan... they are brothers of the same courageous faith...
- Look at the outcome this bold faith... the enemy is confounded...
 - v15-16, 20-23
 - 15 Terror spread through the Philistine camp and the open fields to all the troops. Even the garrison and the raiding parties were terrified. The earth shook, and terror spread **from God**.^[c] 16 When Saul's watchmen in Gibeah of Benjamin looked, they saw the panicking troops scattering in every direction...20 Saul and all the troops with him assembled and marched to the battle, and there the Philistines were, fighting against each other in great confusion! 21 There were Hebrews from the area who had gone earlier into the camp to join the Philistines, but even they joined the Israelites who were with Saul and Jonathan. 22 When all the Israelite men who had been hiding in the hill country of Ephraim heard that the Philistines were fleeing, they also joined Saul and Jonathan in the battle. 23 So the Lord saved Israel that day.
 - The bold faith of Jonathan... and later of David... and of Jehoshaphat and of Ezra and Nehemiah...
 - All served to send the enemies of God to their doom, in chaos and confusion...
 - ...but while Jonathan's boldness is busy confounding the enemy...
 - We see something very different with our boy Saul...
 - Saul leans into his sinful disobedience from Chapter 13...
 - He leans into his arrogance and formulaic superstitions... these legalistic human attempts to ensure Yahweh's blessing...
 - And we see, where bold faith confounds the enemy...
 - Point 2: Arrogant legalism confounds the people of God.
 - Just a heads up, from here through the end of the chapter, I am going to be summarizing certain parts of this passage, but you should go and read it for yourself to make sure I am not just making stuff up...
 - While Jonathan was off being a total stud... what was happening with his father, Saul?
 - 1 Samuel 14: 2-3a
 - 2 Saul was staying under the pomegranate tree in Migron on the outskirts of Gibeah.^[a] The troops with him numbered about six hundred. 3 Ahijah, who was wearing an ephod, was also there. He was the son of Ahitub, the brother of Ichabod son of Phinehas, son of Eli the Lord's priest at Shiloh...
 - As the enemies of God were busy fortifying their positions... Saul was busy sitting beneath a pomegranate tree, with a man named Ahijah... a priest... decked out with an ephod and everything...
 - We think... Maybe he is making progress... Maybe... after being rebuked by Samuel, Saul is getting his spiritual act together, surrounding himself with holy folks... certainly with a priest on hand he won't need to offer a sacrifice himself again, right?
 - Well, the only problem is that Ahijah... is from the REJECTED line of priests... his brother Ichabod literally means the glory has departed...
 - So... the rejected king... is sitting with a rejected priest... in place of relative luxury, while his son slips off and goes to war.
 - Upon seeing the enemy camp thrown into chaos, the literal terror of God being poured out on the Philistines, what does Saul do? Rally his forces and charge into the fray...
 - Nope...

- He does a roll call... he tries to find out who has started the battle... who is the one who is going to get the credit for this?
- Then, he attempts to invoke the Lord's favor on this battle by carrying a good luck charm into battle with him...
- 1 Samuel 14: 18-19

18 Saul told Ahijah, "Bring the ark of God," for it was with the Israelites at that time. 19 While Saul spoke to the priest, the panic in the Philistine camp increased in intensity. So Saul said to the priest, "Stop what you're doing."

 - Now the word ark here has variously been translated "ark" and "ephod"... perhaps it is referencing the little carrier on the ephod that held the Urim and the Thummim... maybe it was the actual Ark of the Covenant... but whatever it was, it is clear from his quickness to abandon it, that Saul has pragmatic and not devotional intentions for its use...
 - It seems as though Saul is trying to navigate the fact that he has been rejected by Yahweh as the king.
 - He is still attempting to ingratiate himself into the favor of his people's god here...
 - **Expound on ANE worship (prophets of Baal cutting themselves, sacrifices before war, etc)**
 - No where in the law was a sacrifice commanded before battle to garner the Lord's favor... Saul had taken that from the surrounding cultures...
 - Now he is practicing straight up divination and relic worship with the whole ark/ephod thing...
 - We know it is pragmatic because the second he sees the victory near, he jettisons the religious artifacts and ritual, and heads into the battle.
- What we see next from Saul is par for the course...
 - As the word gets around that the Philistines are losing, all those folks who started deserting in Chapter 13, suddenly find their courage and will to fight and rally around Saul and Jonathan... even those Hebrews who had gone over to fight alongside the Philistines switched sides again... and the Philistines retreat...
- 1 Samuel 14: 23b-24

The battle extended beyond Beth-aven, 24 and the men of Israel were **worn out that day**, for Saul had placed the troops under an oath: "The man who eats food before evening, before I have taken vengeance on my enemies is cursed." So, none of the troops tasted any food.

 - Here Saul does another foolish religious thing... a confounding thing for his soldiers...
 - He adopts this weird position of public spirituality...
 - He mandates a fast...
 - These soldiers who have been fighting all day... on physically demanding terrain... he tells them they can't eat or they will die.
 - This becomes an insult to the fatigue and hunger of his soldiers, as they start walking through a forest where there is so much honey it is dripping onto the ground around them
 - This is literally what was promised to them (a land flowing with milk and honey)... and because of an oath that Saul made...
 - An oath, by the way, that God did not ask or command him to make...
 - These soldiers cannot avail themselves of this blessed encouragement that is dripping from the trees.
 - Unlike Jonathan, Saul hasn't taken this rash step in faith, he isn't doing it for the glory of God...
 - He is doing for his own glory... to take vengeance upon *his* enemies...
 - After all, if these enemies had stayed in their own country, he would not have been FORCED to make that sacrifice that ruined his fledgling kingship...

- It is starting to become clear why Jonathan did not tell his father about his raid initially.
- What happens next reveals Saul does not demand a high degree of respect from his son.
 - So Jonathan didn't Saul him proclaim the oath... so he goes right ahead and eats the honey...
 - When one of the soldiers tells him what his father swore, this is how he replies...
 - 1 Samuel 14: 29-33

29 Jonathan replied, "My father has brought trouble to the land. Just look at how I have renewed energy[k] because I tasted a little of this honey. 30 How much better if the troops had eaten freely today from the plunder they took from their enemies! Then the slaughter of the Philistines would have been much greater."
 - Jonathan is kind of dunking on his father the king's decision making here.
 - And the text doesn't imply that he is wrong... maybe he is wrong for doing so... but it seems a legitimate critique...
 - And look... what happens next VINDICATES Jonathan's critique that Saul has brought trouble and it would have been better for the troops to have eaten...
 - 31 The Israelites struck down the Philistines that day from Michmash all the way to Aijalon. Since the Israelites were completely exhausted, 32 they rushed to the plunder, took sheep, goats, cattle, and calves, slaughtered them on the ground, and ate meat with the blood still in it. 33 Some reported to Saul, "Look, the troops are sinning against the Lord by eating meat with the blood still in it." Saul said, "You have been unfaithful..."
 - Now our jaws just kind of drop from the hypocrisy of it all...
 - Saul... who has NEVER REPENTED OF HIS LAWLESSNESS EVEN WHEN CONFRONTED BY THE PROPHET OF GOD...
 - Saul, who has been using the artifacts of worship like good luck charms...
 - Saul... Who has been trying to manipulate the deity with quasi-religious acts, as though Yaweh was just like other ANE demon gods...
 - Saul is accusing these war weary and famished soldiers, famished because they obeyed Saul's stupid restrictions, of being unfaithful...
 - Now Saul is concerned with faithful obedience to God's commands?
 - What happens next is even worse.
 - After making a makeshift altar and getting all holier-than-thou about not sinning in their food preparation...
 - You know how Saul prepares to consummate this banner day?
 - By engaging in some more unsuccessful divination and attempted murder...
 - He gets the priest to inquire of God whether he should finish off the Philistines... as if it wasn't already apparent that God had given the Philistines over to them...
 - Unsurprisingly, God does not answer him... so what does he do?
 - He accuses the people of sin... against HIS oath...
 - He says someone amongst you has broken the oath and darn it, even if it is my own son Jonathan, that person is going to pay the price...
 - And when the casting of lots reveals that it IS Jonathan, Jonathan courageously and unapologetically owns it...
 - And in his pride and legalistic arrogance...
 - Saul is going to do the unthinkable... to kill his own son... kill the one through whom the Lord delivered Israel that day...
 - Keep in mind, Jonathan's breaking of an oath was not a capital sin in God's law... it does not require the death penalty... just a simple trespass offering...
 - And to our relief, before Saul kills him, the people intervene to deliver Jonathan.

- They cry out **“Must Jonathan die? He accomplished such a great deliverance for Israel! No, as the Lord lives, not a hair of his head will fall to the ground, for he worked with God’s help today.”**
- Now, what Saul has been doing in tooling around with religion could quite frankly be characterized as superstition... or divination...
 - Clearly Saul is a false believer... as 1 Samuel progresses we will see his pagan divinations only end up increasing alongside his insecurity and madness...
 - But this binding of his people’s lives and conscience to this idiotic quasi-religious endeavor is a perfect picture of what legalism is... and what it does...
 - The vain oath he took heaped up a heavy burden on his people... and it wound up giving birth to more unrighteousness...
 - Had the people of Israel not been fed up with Saul’s rash oaths, oaths that both fell short of and went far past what God’s law required... an innocent man... the king’s own son... would have died.
 - All paganism... all divination and superstition and witchcraft and idol worship... it is ALL just a form of arrogant legalism...
 - It is all rooted in the assumption that I can figure out how to navigate whatever god’s or power’s or lifeforce’s requirements in order to receive their favor.
 - It gives birth to confusion, unbearable burdens, unrighteousness, and ultimately, death.
 - And although Saul is a major figure in the next 16 Chapters of 1 Samuel, his royal epitaph is written here in Chapter 14:47-51... indicating that his kingdom has ended and now he is a false king...
- So how do we apply this today... First... we need to be reminded...

APPLICATION:

- The Church of God NEEDS your bold faith.
 - Our faith, though intensely personal... it is not private... it is a gift from God for the edification of the CHURCH...
 - And like every other gift that is given, though it come from above, God gives it to us to use...
 - Now he doesn’t give identically to everyone...
 - there are some people to whom God has given such a massive measure of faith that they are borderline sociopaths...
 - Stuff that would bother ANY other human on the face of the planet, doesn’t phase these folks...
 - Because their portion of faith is larger than their portion of personal embarrassment or self-preservation. These are the Jonathans who charge out into the world because someone out there has never heard the glories of Christ proclaimed,
 - It doesn’t matter what it costs them.
 - Jim and Elizabeth Elliot. David Livingston, Eric Liddle, Hudson Taylor, Charles Spurgeon.
 - Yet to others he has given just enough faith... just enough that they cling desperately to Christ, even while the waves of trial and doubt wash over them...
 - The one who constantly seems to be crying out “I believe, but help my unbelief!”
 - And we need both of them... We need you... I need you...
 - I need to see how to boldly go into my neighborhood and risk my reputation to see Christ exalted in the hearts of the unsaved...

- I also I need to see how to keep clinging to Christ... even after you have been diagnosed with a CATASTROPHIC illness... or lost a child...
- I need to see dead people raised to new life... its why I cry every baptism Sunday no matter how much I tell myself I won't.
 - It stirs something in us to see another person's faith...
- Jonathan's bold faith rallied the people to victory...
 - Our faith is an encouragement to one another.
 - Paul speaks about it in his desire to come to the Roman church... so that they might be mutually encouraged by one another's faith.
 - Bold faith stirred something in the heart of God when he saw four friends tear the roof off a house in order to bring their crippled friend to him for healing.
- Do not deprive the church of the witness of your faith... Act on whatever your "Perhaps the Lord will..."... for if you are a believer nothing can separate you from the love of Christ...
 - and if you are not a believer, he will be no means turn away the one who comes to him in faith... and the church needs the encouragement...
- You NEED to kill your legalism... before it kills you.
 - Brothers and sisters, if anything other than Christ is giving you assurance of your good standing before God this morning... that is legalism...
 - And though it is giving you some measure of assurance today... it will morph and begin to bring forth unrighteousness... heaping up heavy burdens upon you and those close to you... and begin working death in your soul...
 - If you are thinking the good things... your church attendance... your giving... your parenting... your religious actions or devotion... are somehow garnering the favor of God, you are falling prey to the trap of legalism...
 - God has only ever given us his favor because of the works of one man... the Lord Jesus Christ...
 - And for the Christian it is a hard line to walk... we are certainly saved TO do Good Works, as it says in Ephesians...
 - But so frequently... especially in seasons when the enemy seems to prevail... when the Lord's presence seems distant or his voice quiet... we can drift towards legalism...
 - Equating our righteousness with how often we do our bible study, or workout, or how are kids are turning out...
 - And that will confound you and those around you, starting to stink of death....
 - And for the one who is here... (YOUR LEGALISM WILL NOT SAVE YOU...)