

1 Samuel 14:24-52 – Snatching Defeat From The Jaws Of Victory

May 22, 2022

1. Background

So the Lord saved Israel that day... And the men of Israel had been hard pressed that day,... 1 Samuel 14:23a–24a (ESV)

...so Saul had laid an oath on the people, saying, "Cursed be the man who eats food until it is evening and I am avenged on my enemies." So none of the people had tasted food. 1 Samuel 14:24 (ESV)

Saul — A Study In Poor Leadership

1. Poor leaders use their position to serve themselves instead of others.

Now when all the people came to the forest, behold, there was honey on the ground. And when the people entered the forest, behold, the honey was dropping, but no one put his hand to his mouth, for the people feared the oath. 1 Samuel 14:25–26 (ESV)

But Jonathan had not heard his father charge the people with the oath, so he put out the tip of the staff that was in his hand and dipped it in the honeycomb and put his hand to his mouth, and his eyes became bright. 1 Samuel 14:27 (ESV)

Then one of the people said, "Your father strictly charged the people with an oath, saying, 'Cursed be the man who eats food this day.' " And the people were faint. 1 Samuel 14:28 (ESV)

Then Jonathan said, "My father has troubled the land. See how my eyes have become bright because I tasted a little of this honey. How much better if the people had eaten freely today of the spoil of their enemies that they found. For now the defeat among the Philistines has not been great." 1 Samuel 14:29–30 (ESV)

2. A poor leader makes rules that take life from God's people instead of giving life to people.

They struck down the Philistines that day from Michmash to Aijalon. And the people were very faint. 1 Samuel 14:31 (ESV)

The people pounced on the spoil and took sheep and oxen and calves and slaughtered them on the ground. And the people ate them with the blood. 1 Samuel 14:32 (ESV)

Moreover, you shall eat no blood whatever, whether of fowl or of animal, in any of your dwelling places. Whoever eats any blood, that person shall be cut off from his people." Leviticus 7:26–27 (ESV)

3. A poor leader encourages unintentional sin.

Then they told Saul, "Behold, the people are sinning against the LORD by eating with the blood." And he said, "You have dealt treacherously; roll a great stone to me here." And Saul said, "Disperse yourselves among the people and say to them, 'Let every man bring his ox or his sheep and slaughter them here and eat, and do not sin against the LORD by eating with the blood.' " So every one of the people brought his ox with him that night and they slaughtered them there. And Saul built an altar to the LORD; it was the first altar that he built to the LORD. 1 Samuel 14:33–35 (ESV)

4. A poor leader is quick to see the sin in others but they are blind to the sin in themselves.

Then Saul said, "Let us go down after the Philistines by night and plunder them until the morning light; let us not leave a man of them." And they said, "Do whatever seems good to you." 1 Samuel 14:36a (ESV)

5. A poor leader makes excessive demands on people.

...But the priest said, "Let us draw near to God here." And Saul inquired of God, "Shall I go down after the Philistines? Will you give them into the hand of Israel?"...

1 Samuel 14:36b-37 (ESV)

...But he did not answer him that day. 1 Samuel 14:37 (ESV)

And Saul said, "Come here, all you leaders of the people, and know and see how this sin has arisen today. For as the LORD lives who saves Israel, though it be in Jonathan my son, he shall surely die."... 1 Samuel 14:38–39 (ESV)

6. A poor leader makes rash decisions.

...But there was not a man among all the people who answered him.

1 Samuel 14:39 (ESV)

Then he said to all Israel, "You shall be on one side, and I and Jonathan my son will be on the other side." And the people said to Saul, "Do what seems good to you."

Therefore Saul said, "O LORD God of Israel, why have you not answered your servant this day? If this guilt is in me or in Jonathan my son, O LORD, God of Israel, give Urim. But if this guilt is in your people Israel, give Thummim." And Jonathan and Saul were taken, but the people escaped. Then Saul said, "Cast the lot between me and my son Jonathan." And Jonathan was taken. 1 Samuel 14:40–42 (ESV)

Then Saul said to Jonathan, "Tell me what you have done." And Jonathan told him, "I tasted a little honey with the tip of the staff that was in my hand. Here I am; I will die."

1 Samuel 14:43 (ESV)

And Saul said, "God do so to me and more also; you shall surely die, Jonathan."

1 Samuel 14:44 (ESV)

7. A poor leader cares more about their position than their people.

Then the people said to Saul, "Shall Jonathan die, who has worked this great salvation in Israel? Far from it! As the LORD lives, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground, for he has worked with God this day." So the people ransomed Jonathan, so that he did not die. 1 Samuel 14:45 (ESV)

When Saul had taken the kingship over Israel, he fought against all his enemies on every side, against Moab, against the Ammonites, against Edom, against the kings of Zobah, and against the Philistines. Wherever he turned he routed them. And he did valiantly and struck the Amalekites and delivered Israel out of the hands of those who plundered them. Now the sons of Saul were Jonathan, Ishvi, and Malchi-shua. And the names of his two daughters were these: the name of the firstborn was Merab, and the name of the younger Michal. And the name of Saul's wife was Ahinoam the daughter of Ahimaaz. And the name of the commander of his army was Abner the son of Ner, Saul's uncle. Kish was the father of Saul, and Ner the father of Abner was the son of Abiel. There was hard fighting against the Philistines all the days of Saul. And when Saul saw any strong man, or any valiant man, he attached him to himself. 1 Samuel 14:47–52 (ESV)

8. Success in the eyes of people is not the same as success in the eyes of God.

- Jesus is the one leader worth following. He is the leader we need.

Life Group Questions

1. **Read 1 Samuel 14:24-52.** What stuck out to you in this week's study?
2. What foolish vows did Saul make? What can we learn about the danger of rash promises from Saul and these verses? **Read Judges 11:30-40, Matthew 14:6-12, Acts 23:21, Matthew 5:34-37.**
3. Is there a time when a vow should be broken because it would be more sinful to keep it than to break it? What kind of vow is good to make?
4. It is hard for leaders to remain humble and godly. After looking at Saul, what went wrong in his life and his heart? What lessons can we learn from his fall?
5. Of the poor leadership qualities in Saul's life, which one most readily manifests itself in you? What can you do to guard against it? How does Jesus help?
6. Saul was known for taking life from the people around him. One of our 5-Year Vision points is we want to be known as a church that loves our community in visible ways. As a life group brainstorm and execute a plan to encourage and love people in the community in a tangible way.