

1st Samuel Chapters 12-13 – John Karmelich

1. When I wrote the introduction in my first lesson on 1st Samuel, I made the statement that the opposite of faith is fear.” When one lacks faith in God, fear comes in.
 - a) The overriding theme of these two chapters is about fear and faith.
 - b) Samuel the Prophet is urging the Israelites to remember their history.
 - i) He recites some of the Israelites history how God has bailed out the nation.
 - ii) Samuel is saying in effect, “Look folks, God has saved your forefathers out of situations much worse than what you’re going through. Trust in Him, and you won’t have to worry about your problems”
 - iii) Jesus himself spends a paragraph on not-worrying in Matthew 6:25-34.
 - c) The problem is the Nation of Israel were too busy looking around, and not looking up to God. They focused on what was around them.
 - i) That focus is what led them to ask for a king. It is like peer pressure. All the nations around them had a king, and they wanted to be like everyone else.
 - ii) King Saul, the first King of Israel was a reflection of what the nation was going through. He was a man full of fear because He was not a man of faith.
 - a) Oh sure, Saul went through all the rituals of a good Jewish boy and man. I’m sure he attended synagogue and made all the right sacrifices. That is all good and well. The problem with Saul is “when push came to shove”, Saul lacked the obedience to be a good king because Saul lacked the trust in God to be a good king.
 - b) Faith is all about trusting in what you can’t see. The classic example is a chair. Faith is saying a chair will hold my weight. The application of faith is actually sitting in that chair. Doing all the “religious stuff” of going to church etc. is like saying the chair holds your weight. How one lives their life outside of church is just like sitting in that chair.
 - iii) In Chapter 13, we will read of the Israelites being defeated by the Philistines
 - a) While we don’t read of the actual battles, we do read the results. We read how the Israelite solders deserted. We read of the Israelite people hiding in caves. The whole lesson is about fear.
 - d) Fear, if not kept in check can consume us. It grows and grows if it is not counteracted with faith. Just like the Philistine army “consuming” the Israelites is how we can be consumed by our own fears.
 - i) Sometimes fears are real and sometimes we fear the unknown. There is a classical expression that says, “Most of the things we fear in life never happen”.
 - ii) For the Israelites, the fears were real. They saw their enemies attacking them. Instead of turning to God, they ran in fear.
 - iii) The lessons for us to learn from this chapter are not to say, “Oh those poor Jewish people. They should have trusted God more.” ☺ The point is to take personal inventory and see what fears can and do consume us.
 - e) OK, lets’ suppose we are dealing with fear. What is the solution?
 - i) Often the correct solution is to take “baby steps”. It is to say, “For the next 30 seconds, I’m not going to worry about this problem”. Then try another 30 seconds. It is to ask God to help you moment by moment to overcome your fears.
 - f) Speaking of fears, this is a long lesson and I don’t want to ramble too long in my intro. ☺

2. Verse 1: Samuel said to all Israel, "I have listened to everything you said to me and have set a king over you.² Now you have a king as your leader. As for me, I am old and gray, and my sons are here with you. I have been your leader from my youth until this day.³ Here I stand. Testify against me in the presence of the LORD and his anointed. Whose ox have I taken? Whose donkey have I taken? Whom have I cheated? Whom have I oppressed? From whose hand have I accepted a bribe to make me shut my eyes? If I have done any of these, I will make it right."
- a) First, let's recap what was happening in Chapter 11:
- i) Saul was publicly anointed King of Israel.
 - ii) Saul then leads an army over a victory over a neighboring tribe, the Ammonites.
 - iii) The last few verses of Chapter 11 were "party time". The people were all gathered together to celebrate the victory and give God credit. Sacrifices were made to God for this specific victory. Samuel was doing the sacrifices as Israel's spiritual leader.
 - iv) Chapter 11 had a happy ending.
- b) Chapter 12 is still the same setting and the same location. Samuel is now giving a speech to all of Israel, or at the least a vast majority of the Israelites with all the leaders present.
- i) Let me paraphrase what Samuel is saying in these verses: "Whether I liked it or not, God has raised me up to be a leader over you. I wasn't a king, but I became a spiritual leader and was a judge over issues. Now I'm an old man. You people asked for a king and now you've got one. God still called me to be a spiritual leader, but no longer a government leader. Just to prove that I've accepted this role, notice my two sons are not up on stage with me, but down there with you as part of the common folk (that's the idea of Verse 2). Further, I'm about to give you some predictions by God. To validate that I am a man of my word, let me give a brief summary of my life in that I've never cheated or stole from anyone"
 - ii) What Samuel is about to do is give a harsh speech to the Israelites over the problems that are going to come because Israel has chosen a king for themselves.
 - a) These first few verses set the tone. It is Samuel reminding the people of what has happened in the past as well as his reputation.
 - iii) If you read the last few lines, it sounds like Samuel is bragging.
 - a) These verses read as if Samuel is saying, "Hey, I'm a holier-than-thou kind of guy. I've never messed up and I'm here to tell ya' all about it." ☺
 - b) That is not the intent of those verses. This is about Saul putting his reputation on the line. Samuel is about to predict all sorts of bad things that are going to happen to Israel.
 - c) This is about earned respect. Samuel wanted to establish his credibility. I seriously doubt that Samuel was arguing that he was perfect, he is just stating his case that he has been loyal to God all of his life and that he is putting his credibility on the line of what Samuel is about to preach.
- c) OK, time for the personal application. What can we learn from these verses?
- i) First comes the importance of a good reputation: God is saying it is more important than money or anything else the world has to offer:
 - a) "A good name is more desirable than great riches; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold." (Proverbs 22:1 NIV)
 - b) If Samuel didn't have such a reputation, people wouldn't take him seriously. Again, this is not about being perfect. People understand when we make mistakes because we all do. This is about dedication. Samuel had a reputation of being dedicated to God and respected him for it.

- c) That same type of dedication is what people are looking for in us. When we tell others about God, our reputation is on the line. We want people to know that our trust in God is an integral part of our lives and we “live it” as well as preach it. People won’t take seriously what you have to say about God unless you have the reputation of being dedicated to God.
 - ii) The second thing we can glean from this paragraph is about leadership style.
 - a) The fact that Samuel didn’t put his sons up on the stage is “putting his money where his mouth is”. Samuel purposely didn’t want them up there with him to show that he wasn’t showing any family favoritism.
 - b) Grant it, Samuel could have had his sons next to him and still said how God is choosing Saul and not his sons. Sometimes the visual picture like not having the sons on stage says a lot more than the words themselves.
 - c) The last few verses are Samuel’s speech about his own life. Notice the speech did not go on for three pages. ☺ Samuel spent enough time to establish the point without going on and on about it.
 - d) Samuel ends this little speech with the phrase, “If I’ve done anything wrong, let me know and I’ll make it right”. Notice the humility of that statement. Samuel isn’t claiming he was perfect. If anything, he is saying, point something out and I’ll deal with it.
- 3. Verse 4: "You have not cheated or oppressed us," they replied. "You have not taken anything from anyone's hand."
 - a) The crowd responded positively. Notice the crowd did not say, “Hmm...let us think about for a bit”. The fact that the crowd responded quickly and positively says a lot for Samuel’s reputation.
 - b) The interesting thing is we live in a world of high-speed communication where every political and religious leader is scrutinized under a microscope. I don’t think it is possible for someone in our society to get away with anything if they tried.
 - i) One also has to remember that God holds our leaders to a higher standard. Therefore, God doesn’t let our religious leaders “get away” with anything. I’m going to argue that all significant, scandalous sin by religious leaders eventually comes out in public as God cares about his reputation.
 - c) Now comes the personal application: Before God can raise you up to any point of prominence, God wants you to work on keeping your reputation clean. Again, this is about dedication and obedience. This is not about perfection. This is about sticking close to God. This is about having a good “healthy” fear of God to a point you care about your actions as you don’t want to offend God.
- 4. Verse 5: Samuel said to them, "The LORD is witness against you, and also his anointed is witness this day, that you have not found anything in my hand." "He is witness," they said.
 - a) What Samuel is doing in these verses is “putting himself on trial”. He wants the crowd to judge him. The purpose of those verses stating Samuel’s reputation is Samuel’s “defense” in front of the people. Now Samuel asks the crowd to be his judge. They found Samuel not guilty of any misrepresentation before God.
 - b) That is what we all need to strive for in our lives. A reputation of being dedicated to God and not being guilty of any significant crime.
 - i) I can think of a number of prominent religious leaders who can state that. I can also think of a number of other ones who have lost that reputation due to say, some adulterous scandal that has ruined their lives. What’s the difference between the two?

- ii) I would argue that both types of leaders are tempted. Both types of leaders pray to God and seek God for forgiveness. The danger is letting power and prominence go to your head. When you start to lose a healthy fear of God and start focusing on one's own prominence is when the downfall occurs.
5. Verse 6: Then Samuel said to the people, "It is the LORD who appointed Moses and Aaron and brought your forefathers up out of Egypt." ⁷ Now then, stand here, because I am going to confront you with evidence before the LORD as to all the righteous acts performed by the LORD for you and your fathers.
- a) From Verse 6 to Verse 12, Samuel is giving a history lesson. Notice Verse 7 states, "I am going to confront you with evidence".
 - i) What Samuel is doing is holding the nation of Israel accountable by their history. The idea is that they should learn from their forefathers and not make the same errors. Jesus stated the line, "to much is given, much is required" in Luke 12:48. God saying in effect, "Since you knew better, you should have acted better".
 - b) Samuel is starting to recite a summary of the history of Israel with an emphasis on the following repeated pattern:
 - i) First, God is blessing the Nation of Israel;
 - ii) Then the Israelites get complacent and turn away from God.
 - iii) Then God punishes the Israelites for turning away from God.
 - iv) Then the Israelites cry out to God to save them.
 - v) God in his love for the Israelites picks a person to lead the Israelites to victory. God blesses the Israelites out of His love for them.
 - vi) Then the Israelites get complacent again... The pattern continues.
 - c) Before we "tisk tisk" the Israelites, that pattern is part of the life of every Christian.
 - i) We enjoy God's blessings in our life and get complacent. We start to focus more on the blessings themselves and less dependant and less thankful on the God who has given us those blessings.
 - ii) God says to us in effect, "OK, you want to ignore me for awhile? No problem. I'll just ignore you for awhile." ☺ Watch what happens.
 - iii) After we mess up or get into trouble, we, like the Israelites then turn back to God. You can almost hear God saying, "Hey, good to hear from you! It's been awhile!"
 - iv) God in His love for us, then blesses us and helps us out.
 - v) The problem is we continue this "downward cycle" because we constantly get our focus off of God and unto our own situations.
6. Verse 8: "After Jacob entered Egypt, they cried to the LORD for help, and the LORD sent Moses and Aaron, who brought your forefathers out of Egypt and settled them in this place.
- a) Samuel just recited 400 years of ancient Israelite history in one sentence.
 - i) Jacob was the leader of a family of 70 (including great grandchildren) whom God said to go settle in Egypt. Four hundred years later that family grew into millions. Through Moses and his brother Aaron, God lead those people to the land of Israel. It remains to this day the greatest single Exodus at one time.
 - ii) Let me try to summarize the point of this verse: "Hey folks, you're not living here in Israel out of luck, or because the local residents invited you here. You are only living in this land because God made it possible." What God is asking of you in return is gratitude and obedience.
 - a) That message is the same for us. God has saved us for eternity. What God expects of us in exchange for that free gift is gratitude and obedience.

7. Verse 9: "But they forgot the LORD their God; so he sold them into the hand of Sisera, the commander of the army of Hazor, and into the hands of the Philistines and the king of Moab, who fought against them. ¹⁰ They cried out to the LORD and said, 'We have sinned; we have forsaken the LORD and served the Baals and the Ashtoreths. But now deliver us from the hands of our enemies, and we will serve you.' ¹¹ Then the LORD sent Jerub-Baal, Barak, Jephthah and Samuel, and he delivered you from the hands of your enemies on every side, so that you lived securely.
- a) What you are reading in Verses 9 to 11 is a summary of the Book of Judges.
 - b) In between the time the Israelites conquered the land of Israel by Moses' successor Joshua and the time of 1st Samuel is a 400-year (more or less) time period covered in the book of Judges. The pattern of "seek God, get complacent, God judges, sorrow, repentance, turn to God, God blesses, get complacent, God judges, etc. repeats itself over and over again in the book of Judges like a never ending cycle.
 - i) Verse 9 to 11 paraphrases that idea and gives some examples.
 - ii) I could go into technical details of the specific events and names stated in these verses, but I think you get the idea.
 - iii) The names in this section tie to the Book of Judges. A few names in this section are debated among scholars as to who is Samuel specifically discussing. The main point is "Those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it". Samuel is stating how Israel has messed up in the past. Learn from those mistakes!
8. Verse 12: "But when you saw that Nahash king of the Ammonites was moving against you, you said to me, 'No, we want a king to rule over us'--even though the LORD your God was your king.
- a) Now the verses are getting more personal. Samuel is no longer stating history from decades and centuries ago. He is now talking about what happened last Tuesday. ☺
 - b) Verse 12 mentions Nahash king of the Ammonites. This is the guy we read about in Chapter 11 of Samuel. In case you forgot, we're now in Chapter 12. This is the leader of the people who attacked an Israelite town and said, "Surrender and gouge out an eye". This is the group over which King Saul led an army to defeat.
 - c) Samuel's point is like all the other events of ancient Israelite history this is God working in their lives now and not just some ancient story.
 - i) This brings up the question of ancient history and modern times. Some people wonder, "Why does the bible "end" several thousand years ago?" Why aren't there more recent bible-type events that are part of part of God's word? The answer is God is working today the same way He worked back then. In a sense, the stories of the bible have been repeated throughout history since that time frame. There is no need for further revelation because the patterns of the way God worked that time are still at work today.
 - ii) That is what Samuel is trying to get across in this history lesson. Samuel spent a bunch of verses reciting history and in Verse 12 states what just happened. It is to show how God is still working today as He has in the past.
 - d) There is a second lesson to this verse, and this ties to my opening theme.
 - i) When the Ammonites were threatening the Israelites, the Israelites wanted a king to lead them to victory.
 - ii) Samuel's point is in a sense, "Look folks, God has bailed out this country throughout its history whenever you have turned to him. Why would you want a king now since God has a 100% batting average of protecting you?" ☺
 - iii) This gets back to one's fear overtaking one's trust of God.

- iv) The other nations around Israel had a king and the Israelites wanted to be like “everyone else”. The Israelites were looking left and right instead of “up”. They got their focus on the nations around them instead of on God.
9. Verse 13: Now here is the king you have chosen, the one you asked for; see, the LORD has set a king over you.
- a) Maybe it’s just me, but if I were Saul, I would be red with embarrassment right now. Imagine hearing this from Saul’s perspective: “Hey folks, God doesn’t want you to pick a king. It is wrong, but God relented and let you have one. Here he is next to me”. ☺
 - i) On the other hand, since God has picked Saul, I believe Saul understood that God put him in charge, and there God laid responsibility upon him.
 - ii) The problem we are going to read with Saul over the next few chapters is that Saul reflected the attitude of the people themselves. The Israelites were dealing with fear and God gave them a leader that reflected that fear. We are going to read of Saul’s disobedience to God as a reflection of the people’s disobedience to God.
10. Verse 14: 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! ¹⁵ 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 fathers.
- a) Here is Samuel giving the main point of the history lesson stated up to this verse:
 - i) Samuel is saying, “Your ancestors rebelled against God and paid the price. If you learn from their mistakes, and be obedient to God, you will be fine despite the fact you picked this king to rule over you. On the other hand, if you choose to act just like they did, you will suffer just like they did.”
 - ii) Notice these commands are to the people and not to Saul.
 - iii) The lesson here is when a country collectively turns their back on God, we shouldn’t blame the leadership. The problem is staring at us in the mirror.
 - iv) Saul’s upcoming failure as a king is a direct reflection of how the people act.
 - b) What does this mean practically for you and me? Does this mean that if I sin badly enough, the whole county is going to go to pot? ☺
 - i) Most likely no. ☺ This is about collective judgment and collective responsibility.
 - ii) It starts with individuals like you and me praying for our country and for its leadership. Once we go down that path of prayer for our country, I find that God honors that prayer and it grows.
 - iii) There was a terrific story some years back about a very corrupt city in South America that had one of the highest murder rates in the world. One man started to fast and pray daily for that city. “All of a sudden” the newspaper reported there murder rate decreased the next day and week for the first time in years. That man got others to join him and soon it became a movement. That city’s reputation changed over the next few years and much of the bad element disappeared. It was a living example how God can bless a location because those who trusted in God were turning toward him. It also shows how one person can make a difference.
11. Verse 16: "Now then, stand still and see this great thing the LORD is about to do before your eyes! ¹⁷ Is it not wheat harvest now? I will call upon the LORD to send thunder and rain. And you will realize what an evil thing you did in the eyes of the LORD when you asked for a king." ¹⁸ Then Samuel called upon the LORD, and that same day the LORD sent thunder and rain. So all the people stood in awe of the LORD and of Samuel.
- a) These three verses would make a great scene for a movie.

- i) First you have to understand that the time of the year when the wheat harvest happens, there is no rain. This is desert country. There are many months out of the year where it never rains and this was that time of the year.
 - ii) Imagine Samuel saying, "To prove all I am saying is true, thunder and rain will happen right now. All of a sudden, thunder breaks out and it starts raining." It is like those medieval wizards calling down for thunder and it happens on the spot.
 - iii) The last sentence says, "So all the people stood in awe of the LORD and of Samuel." Personally I would be too if all of that happened as it did.
 - b) It makes you wonder how Samuel was inspired to do this. I assume that God told him to do this in some form or fashion and Samuel did it. I also suspect that when Samuel started this speech, there wasn't a cloud in the sky. If it was on the verge of rain prior to the speech, the crowd wouldn't be that impressed.
12. Verse 19: The people all said to Samuel, "Pray to the LORD your God for your servants so that we will not die, for we have added to all our other sins the evil of asking for a king."
- a) It is always interesting how a visual reminder gets people to repent. You get the impression that as Samuel was giving his speech about asking for a king, the audience was thinking, "Yeah, yeah, we've heard all of that. Now give us a king". Once the thunder and lightening started up, their attitudes changed. ☺
 - b) This reminds me of a classical joke that traffic cops use. It says that when they pull someone over, a warning is good for five miles and a ticket is good for ten miles. The point is that when people see visual signs for repentance, those signs are only good for a short time. Once things are back to normal, they don't change.
 - i) Notice the Israelites still wanted the king, despite their awe over Samuel.
 - ii) We will read of the mistakes and sins the Israelites will collectively make in the next chapter as they focus on their fears and not God.
 - iii) Jesus said, "If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead." (Luke 16:31 NIV). Jesus' point is that miracles are not enough to change people on a long-term basis. There has to be a commitment to follow God. "Listening to Moses and the Prophets" is a way of saying one has to study their bible and be committed to its teachings.
13. Verse 20: "Do not be afraid," Samuel replied. "You have done all this evil; yet do not turn away from the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart. ²¹ Do not turn away after useless idols. They can do you no good, nor can they rescue you, because they are useless.
- a) Verses 20-25 are to me, the most important verses in this text. It's pay attention time! ☺
 - b) It starts with the phrase "Do not be afraid".
 - i) I've stated in earlier lessons the opposite of faith is not "no faith" but fear.
 - ii) Fear is to worry about the future and negative possibilities.
 - iii) Sometimes fear is a good thing. Our bodies have a set of instincts to help keep us from danger.
 - iv) Fear, in this context is about getting our focus off of God and unto their problems.
 - a) The Israelites wanted a king because they were afraid of the surrounding nations. Despite the fact they understood it was not God's will, they wanted a king out of fear so they could have "protection".
 - c) Verses 20-21 makes the statements of turning toward God and away from idols.
 - i) When we think of idols, we think of some ancient people bowing down to statues. Those statues represented the gods that they worshipped. Many gave in to idols due to peer pressure. The surrounding nations worshipped other gods and had statues representing those gods. To worship those gods meant to be loved by others around them. It is giving in to peer pressure.

- ii) We still have idols today, only they aren't in statue form.
 - iii) I always argue that everybody has a god or a series of gods. If you look how someone spends their spare time or spare income, you'll find their gods. Today, if you look at people's bumper stickers or license plate holders, you'll often learn what is their god.
 - a) I'm not arguing anti-hobby. I'm arguing over anything and everything that takes your heart away from the true God. A false god is anything in which you put your hope upon other than God himself.
 - b) For example, you could be trusting in your own "wits" to get out of a situation. That is making an idol of yourself or self-discipline.
 - c) You could be trusting in your wealth to bail you out of a problem. That is making an idol out of money. You could be trusting in another person for protection. Again, that is making an idol out of that person.
 - iv) Which leads us back to this verse. Samuel is not pleading with the people to reject Saul as king. God has already "reluctantly" agreed to that request. What God is saying through Samuel is to trust in God over and above that king and no not turn to anyone other than God himself for help in our lives.
14. Verse 22: For the sake of his great name the LORD will not reject his people, because the LORD was pleased to make you his own.
- a) Here is an important verse to comprehend.
 - b) The key phrase to understand is "The LORD will not reject his people".
 - i) Let's get it straight that "His people" is the Nation of Israel. God never ever stated anywhere that He has completely and 100% rejected the Nation of Israel from being the "His people". They have been punished lots of times for disobedience, but God made unconditional promises to that nation, and God cannot go back on those promises as His reputation is on the line.
 - ii) Combine that thought with: God cannot lie (Titus 1:2) and the fact that God does not change. (Malachi 3:6).
 - iii) Paul taught in Romans that there will come a day in the future after the "church age" that God will once again turn his focus upon the Nation of Israel:
 - iv) "Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved". (Romans 8:25b-26a, NIV). The "full number of Gentiles" refers to Christian church. There is some specific number of saved people that make up the Christian church. Then Jesus comes back for the church. Then God turns his attention back on Israel. Not due to the "goodness" of the Nation of Israel, but due to God's unconditional promises to Israel.
 - c) OK John, that's neat. I'm not Jewish, what does that have to do with me?
 - i) First of all, it teaches us to have respect and support for the Nation of Israel. God said He will bless those that blesses Israel and curses those that curse Israel. That statement was made to Abraham and it applies to his direct descendants. That same statement was made to Abraham's son as well. (Genesis 12:3, 27:29)
 - ii) Second and more important, we pray for God's blessing not due to our goodness, but because God's reputation is on the line. God promises us unconditional blessings. We don't pray to God based on our goodness, but on God's.

- d) The last phrase states, "Because the LORD was pleased to make you his own".
 - i) The same way God was pleased to make the Nation of Israel "his own" is the same way God was pleased of those He called among the Gentiles (non-Jews) to spend eternity with God. How do you know if you were "called" by God? Easy! ☺ Accept Jesus as payments of your sins and you know that God picked you. If God is perfect, then He must know all things. If He knows all things, He knows who will choose to commit their lives to Him. Since we don't know all things, from our perspective, it is "free-will". Since God knows all things, from His perspective, we are "pre-destined" to be with Him forever.
 - ii) In the New Testament Paul says, "Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham. The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you."" (Galatians 3:7-8 NIV)
15. Verse 23: As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by failing to pray for you. And I will teach you the way that is good and right. ²⁴ But be sure to fear the LORD and serve him faithfully with all your heart; consider what great things he has done for you. ²⁵ Yet if you persist in doing evil, both you and your king will be swept away."
- a) I love Verse 23. Samuel is saying he would "sin" if he failed to pray for you. Samuel was not the high priest whose official duty it was to intercede for the people, but he was called by God to be the spiritual leader. If you are called to such a position, in a sense it is a sin to not pray for them as you are not doing what God called you to do.
 - b) If God calls you to be the spiritual leader of your family or some person who is hurting, I will not say it is a sin to not pray, but I will argue that God wants and desires you to pray for them. That is the most important part of any ministry, over and above any physical service you do on your part.
 - c) In Verse 24, Samuel is preaching to the crowd what great things God has done for the Nation of Israel. He is saying in effect, "Trust in God. In times of doubt or times of fear, think of all the times in past history where God has bailed you out. Focus on what God has done for you and that will help you deal with the current fears." Then Samuel ends with a warning that if they persist on not seeking God, God will take away "your" king and the people himself."
 - i) The sad part is that prediction came true in phases. In a matter of a few chapters we will read of King Saul being taken away from his throne for disobedience. As to the Israelites themselves, they're rebellion against God got worse and worse to a point where they were eventually taken into captivity. My point here is Samuel's prediction was literal and it came true.
 - d) Let's personalize this: Does this mean if we turn from God, He will "sweep us away" as well? First of all, Samuel is talking about the nation doing evil. If our nation, or any nation gets to a point of moral corruption, that nation will fall or will no longer a great power. Historically, the fall of nations usually begins with internal corruption.
 - i) Remember this verse is about corporate disobedience as opposed to individual disobedience. As to individuals, remember that we are God's "witnesses" to the world. If we represent God, He expects us to do it well. If we become a bad witness for God, (e.g., proclaim to follow Jesus, but then live a lifestyle in a way that is the opposite of what the bible teaches), I have found God does find a way to punish us here on earth. This is mainly a "non-salvation" issue and the focus is on our witness for God to others.

16. Chapter 13, Verse 1: Saul was thirty years old when he became king, and he reigned over Israel forty-two years.
- a) This is a controversial verse in the original Hebrew. The NIV translation here adds the words “thirty” and “forty” to the original Hebrew.
 - i) The Hebrew manuscripts we have today appear to have some missing numbers.
 - ii) The King James Version reads, “Saul reigned one year; and when he had reigned two years over Israel,
 - iii) The literal translation may be more like, “Saul was (???) years old when he began to reign, and he reigned and two years over Israel (when the next series of events happened that begin in Verse 2 of this chapter).”
 - iv) We do know from Acts 13:21 that Saul reigned about 40 years so the NIV is not a bad assumption on their part. There is also some other historical evidence to argue that Saul was about 30 years when he became king.
17. Verse 2: Saul chose three thousand men from Israel; two thousand were with him at Micmash and in the hill country of Bethel, and a thousand were with Jonathan at Gibeah in Benjamin. The rest of the men he sent back to their homes.
- a) Remember that when Saul was first anointed king, there was no throne, no palace, and no government. Verses 1 and 2 imply the time when King Saul set up his government and/or give the time frame that Saul was king. When you read through the book of Kings, it is common to start with the total time frame that person was a king.
 - b) In Verse 2, we are reading of Saul setting up an army.
 - c) This is also the first mention of Saul’s son Jonathan. Later in this chapter it mentions Jonathan is Saul’s son. He is a central character through the remainder of 1st Samuel.
 - d) This verse is saying, “Saul set up an army of 3,000 men. Of those 3,000 men Saul personally was in charge of 2,000 of them and his son Jonathan was in charge of 1,000.
 - e) Saul was probably a little over 30. His son Jonathan couldn’t have been much older than a young teenager. Jonathan was roughly the same age as King David, as they were friends.
18. Verse 3: Jonathan attacked the Philistine outpost at Geba, and the Philistines heard about it. Then Saul had the trumpet blown throughout the land and said, "Let the Hebrews hear!" ⁴ So all Israel heard the news: "Saul has attacked the Philistine outpost, and now Israel has become a stench to the Philistines." And the people were summoned to join Saul at Gilgal.
- a) We now read of Saul attacking the Philistines who lives in Israel. We don’t know the reason for this attack, other than the fact the Philistines have been a problem to the Nation of Israel in the past.
 - b) In the same way the Israelites “choose” Saul, Saul “choose” soldiers. My point is there is no indication that God is behind this attack. There is no mention of God or prayer anywhere in this text. In a matter of verses we will read of the soldier’s fear and of desertion. It is as if the writer is reporting a sad part of Israel history.
 - c) Verse 4 says, “Israel has become a stench to the Philistines”. It is a colorful way of saying how Saul provoked the Philistines and now they are angry at Saul and the Israelites.
 - i) The Philistines were a powerful people at that time. It wasn’t so much that they outnumbered the Israelites as much as they had superior technology and could defeat the Israelites with that technology (i.e., ability to make bronze and iron).
 - d) Let’s stand back and see the big picture:
 - i) This whole chapter is leading up to a big failure by the Israelites and by King Saul himself. This whole chapter is about Saul and the people trusting in their own abilities and not God. This history lesson is about the Israelites failure to learn from history. They failed to heed Samuel’s advice and will now pay the price.

19. Verse 5: The Philistines assembled to fight Israel, with three thousand chariots, six thousand charioteers, and soldiers as numerous as the sand on the seashore. They went up and camped at Micmash, east of Beth Aven. ⁶ When the men of Israel saw that their situation was critical and that their army was hard pressed, they hid in caves and thickets, among the rocks, and in pits and cisterns. ⁷ Some Hebrews even crossed the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead.
- a) Now we read of the Philistines assembling for war.
 - b) The sad part is what we read of the Israelites.
 - i) We don't read of them crying out to God.
 - ii) We don't read of them turning to Samuel for intercessory prayer.
 - iii) We read of them hiding in fear of the Philistines. It is the Israelites saying, "The Philistines are more powerful than our God and we are running for our lives".
 - iv) This is the same Israelites who a few chapters back, watched God lead them in a victory over the Philistines. This is the same group of people who sat and listened to Samuel's sermon and watched Samuel call out for thunder and rain.
 - v) The lesson of the last chapter was Samuel preaching, "Remember what God has done for you in the past and fear God. If you do that, he'll protect you."
 - vi) What we have here is the Israelites focusing on their fear and not God.
20. Verse 7 (second sentence): Saul remained at Gilgal, and all the troops with him were quaking with fear. ⁸ He waited seven days, the time set by Samuel; but Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and Saul's men began to scatter. ⁹ So he said, "Bring me the burnt offering and the fellowship offerings." And Saul offered up the burnt offering. ¹⁰ Just as he finished making the offering, Samuel arrived, and Saul went out to greet him.
- a) One of things I've been stating over and over again in these lessons is how King Saul is truly a reflection of the people, and not vice versa. The people had fear. Saul had fear.
 - b) Verse 8 says, "He (Saul) waited seven days, the time set by Samuel"
 - i) Back in Chapter 10, before Saul was a king, Samuel gave specific instructions that whenever a sacrifice was to be made to God to intercede for Israel that Samuel himself was to make the sacrifice. Chapter 10 Verse 8 said King Saul was to wait in Gilgal seven days until Samuel would show up.
 - c) The problem of this paragraph was King Saul failed to wait the 7 days for Samuel.
 - i) Saul "couldn't wait any longer" and did the sacrifice himself. That is when Samuel showed up and caught him.
 - ii) The sin was not so much the king making a sacrifice. King David and King Solomon made the same type of offering with no rebuke. (Reference: 2nd Samuel 24:25 and 1 Kings 3:15). This is about disobedience to Samuel's direct command to wait seven days for him to show up.
 - d) The lesson for you and I is about waiting on God's timing.
 - i) Saul is saying in effect, "I know I'm suppose to wait for Samuel, but gee whiz, my enemies are all around me, my men are deserting me, its time to take matters into my own hands and not wait for Samuel!" ☺
 - ii) That is always the mistake. That is the time when we are making an "idol" out of ourselves. We are saying, "God's not around, so I have to do it myself"
 - a) Do you think God is "big enough" He could handle the Philistines?
 - b) Do you think God is "big enough" that He can handle your problems?
 - c) A big part of "faith" is waiting on God's timing. God called King Saul to a specific act of obedience to test Saul's faith that God would come through.

- d) Does that mean we are to lie in our beds and wait for God to show up? No! God wants us to “keep moving” and trust that God is working in our lives. This is about “worrying and faith”. This is about obedience to what God calls us to do through His Word and trust that God is working things out “His way” and on His timing!
21. Verse 11: "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 Micmash, ¹² I thought, 'Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the LORD's favor.' So I felt compelled to offer the burnt offering."
- a) Verses 11-12 are the tragic verses of the chapter. It is Saul giving excuses. King Saul is stating why he couldn't wait to do the sacrifice. Saul was thinking, "I have to do the sacrifice in order to attack and I need to attack now, so I'm not waiting any longer."
- i) One of my favorite quotes is "The blood of Christ has never covered one excuse" (Source: Corrie ten Boom)
- ii) When we confess our sins to God, He is not interested in our excuses. He just wants to hear our confession of our sin and that's it.
- iii) The same applies to when we say, "We're sorry to others". Adding excuses is trying to justify your actions as opposed to apologizing.
22. Verse 13: "You acted foolishly," 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. ¹⁴ 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."
- a) Samuel is telling King Saul that because Saul failed the seven days, he will be dethroned and his descendants will not be kings.
- b) The first question is, "Does the penalty fit the crime?" After all, it's not like Saul killed someone. ☺ All he did is sacrifice to God without waiting for Samuel.
- i) The answer is if God raises you up to leadership, God holds you accountable to a higher standard. The biggest problem with Saul wasn't the sacrifice, but his fear. That fear of the enemies showed his lack of faith.
- ii) In a sense, this is a "mercy killing". This is God saying, "Look Saul, you lack the faith to be a good leader. For the sake of my people, I'm removing you."
- c) Notice King Saul did not say, "Well ok. I'll go back to searching for donkeys". ☺ Saul was a man of fear. Fear means you don't want change. There was false-security in being a king and Saul didn't want to give that up.
- d) These verses are also our first hints of King David. Verse 14 says, "the LORD has sought out a man after his own heart". This is a title for David. When you read David's life, he made mistakes far worse than sacrificing sheep without a license. ☺ The difference between David and Saul had to do with faith in God versus focusing on one's fears.
23. Verse 15: Then Samuel left Gilgal and went up to Gibeah in Benjamin, and Saul counted the men who were with him. They numbered about six hundred.
- a) Remember King Saul started with 2,000 men. Due to desertion, he now has 600 men.
- b) Notice Saul's first course of action after Samuel told him he would lose his kingship is to go take inventory. That is another sign of fear. There is no sign of remorse. Instead he takes inventory of "his stuff" as He is focusing on "his stuff" and not God.
24. Verse 16: Saul and his son Jonathan and the men with them were staying in Gibeah in Benjamin, while the Philistines camped at Micmash. ¹⁷ Raiding parties went out from the Philistine camp in three detachments. One turned toward Ophrah in the vicinity of Shual, ¹⁸ another toward Beth Horon, and the third toward the borderland overlooking the Valley of Zeboim facing the desert.

- a) These verses are essentially saying that the Philistines were successfully taking revenge for whatever victories the Israelites had over them.
 - b) Part of the Philistines' victory can be directly attributed to Saul's lack of leadership. Saul focused on his problems and not God. His troops deserted him. Now in these verses we are reading of the Philistines' victory.
25. Verse 19: 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!" ²⁰ So all Israel went down to the Philistines to have their plowshares, mattocks, axes and sickles sharpened. ²¹ 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. ²² 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.
- a) These verses are the epilogue account of what happened after they lost to the Philistines.
 - i) The Philistines, in order to prevent the Israelites from attacking again, took away all of their weapons. The Israelites were still farmers. They still needed plowshares, axes, sickles etc. The Philistines had all the sharpening tools and charged money of the Israelites to sharpen their tools.
 - ii) These verses show the contrast to the victories of two chapters back. The Israelites defeated the Ammonites by trusting in God. Here the Israelites were trusting in themselves and the defeat was so bad they couldn't even have any sort of weapons afterwards. It shows how low one can sink in a short time.
 - b) A short time ago, Samuel gave this speech about the Israelite history. It had to do with God blessing them, then the Israelites turn from God, then defeat, then crying out to God and then God, in His love for them, helping them.
 - i) We are in the middle of that pattern again. Only this time, the recovery cycle will be longer. The Israelites have to wait for the rise of King David.
26. The last verse of Chapter 13 goes best with Chapter 14. Therefore, I'll cover it in the next lesson.
27. Back to my introduction, I stated this chapter has to do with fears and not letting your fears overwhelm you. In this lesson, we had Samuel warning the people to have faith in God, and the sad fact of the Israelites focusing on their problems and not God.
28. Let's pray: Heavenly Father, We too have can become consumed with fears when we get our eyes off of You. Help us to remember that You love us unconditionally and have wonderful plans for our lives. Help us moment by moment if necessary to trust You during the difficult times of our lives. Help us to keep the eternal focus and that the same time keep praying for the issues at hand, knowing that You are listening and caring for us. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.