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Samuel (Rise of the King) - Lesson 20

When Leadership Becomes a Burden (1 Samuel 14:24-52)

I. A FOOLISH COMMAND (1 Samuel 14:24-30)

Victory Becomes a Burden

- Israel was already engaged in a demanding pursuit of the Philistines.
- Saul prohibited the soldiers from **EATING** (1).
- The troops became worn out while pursuing the victory.
- A burden came from the very leader who should have helped them.

A Spiritual Sounding Decision

- Saul's oath had a religious form, but spiritual language did not make it wise.
- The fast may have been intended to strengthen Israel's **ZEAL** (2).
- Saul said, "Before I have taken vengeance on my enemies."
- The focus shifted from God's deliverance to Saul's **REVENGE** (3).
- Personal agenda began to intrude on God's victory.

Untouchable Provision

- Honey was on the ground, a provision God had made **AVAILABLE** (4).
- Jonathan tasted a little honey, and his strength was immediately **RESTORED** (5).
- Saul's command **WEAKENED** (6) the soldiers, while God's ordinary provision strengthened them.
- Jonathan said, "My father has brought **TROUBLE** (7) to the land."

When Authority Hinders the Mission

- Food would have strengthened the army and extended the victory.
- Saul's oath reduced effectiveness and undermined **SAUL'S** (8) desired goal.
- Zeal without wisdom can become a burden to the people being led.
- Personal **AGENDA** (9) must never replace God's priorities.

Supporting Scripture: 1 Samuel 14:23 reminds us: the LORD had already saved Israel that day.

Leadership check: Does this help people obey God, or is it merely my preference?

II. THE COST OF BAD LEADERSHIP (1 Samuel 14:31-35)

Exhaustion Becomes Dangerous

- The battle continued from Michmash to Aijalon, and the troops were completely exhausted.
- When the restriction ended, hunger turned into **RECKLESS** (10) action.
- The troops rushed to the plunder and ate meat with the blood still in it.

Saul's Rule Crowds Out God's Command

- The soldiers kept Saul's oath until evening.
- They violated God's command concerning blood; divine instruction was **BROKEN** (11).
- Supporting Scripture: Leviticus 17:10-14 forbids eating blood because the life is in the blood.
- Human expectations can overshadow divine priorities.

Saul Sees Sin but Misses His Role

- Saul recognized a genuine violation and called it **UNFAITHFULNESS** (12).
- He corrected the behavior and stopped the immediate sin.
- He did not acknowledge how his own decision helped create the crisis.
- He missed the deeper **LEADERSHIP** (13) problem.

Religious Activity Is Not Maturity

- Saul built an altar to the LORD; it was his **FIRST** (14) altar.
- The act was appropriate, but his earlier foolishness remained unaddressed.
- Religious **ACTIVITY** (15) cannot substitute for self-awareness and repentance.

Wise leaders ask both: "What did they do wrong?" and "What part did I play?"

III. SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS (1 Samuel 14:36-42)

Ready to Move but Not Ready to Ask

- Saul wanted to continue the pursuit, and the troops were willing to follow.
- The priest stopped the momentum because **GOD** (16) had not yet been consulted.
- Saul had a **PLAN** (17), soldiers, and momentum, but direction still needed to come from God.

When God Is Silent

- Saul finally sought the LORD for direction and victory.
- God gave no **ANSWER** (18), signaling that something was wrong.
- Silence should have led Saul to humble self-examination.

Looking in the Wrong Direction

- Saul immediately looked **OUTWARD** (19) for the sinner.
- He escalated with another rash oath before he knew the **FACTS** (20).
- The troops said nothing, revealing the **TENSION** (21) in Saul's leadership.

The Lot Points to Jonathan

- The troops were cleared, and the final lot selected Jonathan.
- Saul's rash decision moved directly into his own **FAMILY** (22).
- Saul recognized that something was wrong but assumed the problem was outside himself.

Supporting Scripture: Proverbs 16:18 warns that pride comes before destruction and an arrogant spirit before a fall.

IV. WHEN PRIDE THREATENS PEOPLE (1 Samuel 14:43-46)

Jonathan Tells the Truth

- Jonathan did not hide what he had done; he had eaten only a little honey.
- He had not heard Saul's oath and accepted the consequences without **EXCUSE** (23).
- Jonathan's offense was minor and unintentional, but Saul's **OATH** (24) created the crisis.
- The facts gave Saul an opportunity to reconsider.

Saul Doubles Down

- Saul made another solemn oath and insisted that Jonathan must **DIE** (25).
- His own words became more important than the facts or his son's life.
- Pride can make people pay for a leader's unwillingness to admit he was wrong.

The People Correct the King

- The army finally spoke and recognized what God had done **THROUGH** (26) Jonathan.
- Their discernment was clearer than the **KING** (27)'s.
- Jonathan was rescued, and Saul's authority was restrained by the **COMMUNITY** (28).
- Authority does not make every decision right; wise leaders remain correctable.

The Mission Suffers

- Saul gave up the pursuit, and the Philistines returned to their territory.
- The internal crisis created by Saul's oath cost Israel **OPPORTUNITY** (29).
- Jonathan strengthened Israel; Saul's rash demands weakened it.

Key truth: Good leadership helps people carry the mission. Foolish leadership makes the mission heavier.

V. SUCCESS IS NOT THE SAME AS FAITHFULNESS (1 Samuel 14:47-52)

Saul Was Successful

- Saul fought enemies on every side and won real military victories.
- His reign produced **VISIBLE** (30) success.
- A person can be effective in one area while becoming unhealthy in another.

Outward Results Cannot Hide Inner Problems

- Saul could win battles, organize an army, and protect territory.
- Victory does not automatically equal God's **APPROVAL** (31).
- Faithfulness must be judged by more than visible outcomes.

A Kingdom That Looks Established

- Saul's family and military structure were in place.
- His reign appeared **SECURE** (32), but deeper instability was still present.
- Jonathan, Merab, Michal, and Abner prepare the story for what follows.

The King Takes

- The conflict with the Philistines was fierce throughout Saul's days.
- Saul continually enlisted capable **SOLDIERS** (33).
- The benefits of kingship came with a **COST** (34).
- Supporting Scripture: 1 Samuel 8:10-18 records Samuel's warning that a king would take Israel's sons for service.

Lesson Takeaway

- Ability can produce results, but faithfulness requires obedience.
- Leadership must be measured by more than visible **SUCCESS** (35).
- Next lesson: 1 Samuel 15 - To Obey Is Better.

Key truth: Success is not the same as faithfulness.

ANSWER KEY

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|--------------------|-----------------|
| 1. EATING | 18. ANSWER |
| 2. ZEAL | 19. OUTWARD |
| 3. REVENGE | 20. FACTS |
| 4. AVAILABLE | 21. TENSION |
| 5. RESTORED | 22. FAMILY |
| 6. WEAKEND | 23. EXCUSE |
| 7. TROUBLE | 24. OATH |
| 8. SAUL'S | 25. DIE |
| 9. AGENDA | 26. THROUGH |
| 10. RECKLESS | 27. KING |
| 11. BROKEN | 28. COMMUNITY |
| 12. UNFAITHFULNESS | 29. OPPORTUNITY |
| 13. LEADERSHIP | 30. VISIBLE |
| 14. FIRST | 31. APPROVAL |
| 15. ACTIVITY | 32. SECURE |
| 16. GOD | 33. SOLDIERS |
| 17. PLAN | |
| 34. COST | |
| 35. SUCCESS | |