

Life Lesson 61
Jonathon Leads to Victory
I Samuel 13 & 14

Introduction

Sometimes being impatient can get us into trouble. That's what happened to Saul in our story today.

The Story

Saul paced nervously up and down. Where could Samuel be? The Philistines were ready to attack the Israelites – and his men were getting more and more scared. Many of them had already run off to hide. King Saul felt sure that soon all of his army would disappear if he didn't do something. Yet, he had to wait for Samuel to offer the sacrifice to God before they went to battle.

Samuel had told King Saul that he would come in seven days to offer the sacrifice. It was the seventh day. Where could Samuel be? More and more people drifted away, and Saul became more and more nervous.

At last he could stand it no longer. He called the people together and offered the sacrifice himself. He shouldn't have done that! Only the priests were supposed to offer the sacrifices. Saul decided that God's way was too slow, so he made the sacrifice his own way.

Just as he finished, Samuel arrived.

“What have you done?” Samuel demanded.

“Well, the people were being scattered and you weren't here and the Philistines were ready to attack. We have to go to battle soon, so I forced myself and offered the sacrifice on my own,” Saul said.

“You've done foolishly,” Samuel told him. “You couldn't obey God when it was a little bit hard to wait. God would have blessed you and established your kingdom if you had waited and trusted Him. God wants a man after His own heart to be the ruler of His people. He'll bring your reign to a quick end and find someone who loves and trusts Him to be the ruler.”

That was bad news to Saul! Nevertheless, he organized the men who were left and set out to fight the Philistines. Only about 600 men were with Saul to fight the large enemy army.

While Saul and his army camped and tried to figure out what to do, Saul's son Jonathan decided not to wait around.

"Let's go over to the Philistine camp and see what is going on over there," he said to his armor bearer.

They slipped out without being seen and came near the Philistine camp.

"It doesn't matter to God whether He saves by many or by few," Jonathan told his servant. "Why don't we go up and fight those Philistines ourselves?"

"If you go, I'll go with you," his armor bearer replied.

"Let's go up where they can see us," Jonathan said. "If they say, 'Stay there and we'll come and get you,' then we'll know God doesn't want us to attack. If they say, 'Come up and fight us,' then we'll know God is with us and will deliver them into our hands."

They showed themselves to the Philistines and paused to see what would happen.

"You down there – come up and fight us!" the Philistines called.

"Let's go," Jonathan said. "God will give us the victory."

They climbed up the steep cliff on their hands and feet and began to fight. They fought furiously and killed 20 Philistines right away. Then, as the other soldiers came to attack them, an earthquake shook the ground. The Philistines were so frightened that they took off running.

"Look!" Saul's watchmen called. "The Philistines are fighting each other and running away."

Quickly Saul gathered his men and attacked the fleeing Philistines. The Philistines were so confused that they kept fighting each other instead of fighting the Israelites. Then the tribes who were fighting with the Philistines turned against them and began fighting on the Israelite side. The Israelites who had hidden in fear now came out and joined in the battle, too.

Two people had gone to fight and God brought many to help them and gave them a great victory.

Do you think God would have done the same thing for King Saul, if only Saul had trusted Him? Yes, God had already planned to give His people the victory. He was just waiting to see if Saul would rely on Him.

How sad that Saul didn't trust God enough to wait for Him. Saul looked at the circumstances and not at the Lord. He was afraid God wouldn't come through in time and so he took things into his own hands. As a result, he lost God's blessing on his rule.

The Life Lesson

Saul was foolish, but he wasn't the only one who has done the same foolish thing. Many times we are tempted to look at the difficult situations around us instead of trusting the Lord.

"We're running out of time, and the Lord hasn't answered our prayer yet," we think. "We better get busy and do something ourselves."

Many people go into debt buying things God would have provided if they would have waited. Others get into trouble by running away or fighting when they should have waited and let God take care of the problem.

I hope you learn from Saul and will wait on the Lord to take care of your enemies. Taking things into your own hands can only lead to disaster!

Review Questions

What did Saul do wrong?

He offered the sacrifice himself instead of waiting for Samuel.

What was Saul's punishment to be?

He would lose his kingdom.

Who went to fight the Philistines on their own?

Prince Jonathon and his servant.

How did God help Jonathon win?

He sent a big earthquake.

Who won the battle?

The Israelites

Did King Saul need to worry about having enough men to fight?

No, God helped just two men defeat the Philistines.

Do we need to worry when we are obeying God?

No, He can use surprising ways to meet our needs.