

Dr. Robert Chisholm, 1 & 2 Samuel, Session 9, 1 Samuel 13-14

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This is Dr. Bob Chisholm in his teaching on 1 and 2 Samuel. This is session 9, 1 Samuel 13-14. Saul Forfeits a Dynasty, Jonathan's Faith Ignites a Victory, and Saul Dilutes a Victory.

In this lesson, we're going to be looking at 1 Samuel 13 and 14. You'll recall that in chapter 11 Saul led Israel to a military victory. At that point, Samuel renewed the kingship.

There was a public celebration of Saul as king. Now all Israel is supporting him. But then in 1 Samuel 12 Samuel confronted the people and reminded them that the old rules still apply.

You will experience security and blessing if you are obedient. Having a king is not a guarantee of security and blessing. You and your king need to obey the Lord.

So, we're wondering as chapter 12 comes to an end, how will Saul do? How will Israel under Saul do if we're reading the story for the first time? We discover in chapter 13 that Israel is not going to do so well under Saul. Saul himself is going to fail and in fact, forfeit his dynasty. So, as we work our way through 1 Samuel 13 and 14 there are three major sections.

I think we could call it one large episode, but there are three major sections. Chapter 13 verses 1 through 15 which I have entitled Saul Forfeits a Dynasty. And then 1 Samuel 13 verse 16 through chapter 14 verse 23.

So, 13, 16 through 14, 23. Jonathan, Saul's son, is going to step forward and win a great victory and I've entitled this Jonathan's Faith Ignites a Victory. There's actually quite a contrast between Saul and Jonathan, but we'll talk more about that as we work through the passage.

And then in chapter 14 verses 24 through 52, Jonathan has won this great victory, but then in these verses, Saul is going to dilute that victory. And so that's the third major section. Chapter 14 verses 24 through 52, Saul dilutes a victory.

So, we're going to be dealing with these chapters as a unit, but realize that we do have three fairly distinct sections conceptually that we're going to be focusing on as we work our way through the passage. Because we're dealing with these in one lesson, we will need to streamline some things and we won't be able to go into the

text with as much detail as we'd like. But let's look at chapter 13 verses 1 through 15 where Saul forfeits his dynasty.

He's just been made king and now he's going to forfeit this dynasty, even though I think some time has passed. And so, the big idea of this chapter would, God's people can forfeit their privilege and blessing by foolishly disobeying the Lord's Word. There's a lesson to be learned here from Saul's experience.

When we read the NIV at the beginning of chapter 13, we read that Saul was 30 years old when he became king and he reigned over Israel 42 years. Net Bible translation, a translation that I served as editor for, it has Saul was 30 in brackets years old when he began to reign and he ruled over Israel for 40 in brackets years. And there's some uncertainty here among translators.

That's because the Hebrew text is very, very confusing at this point. It says that Saul was seemingly one year old when he became king and he ruled two years over Israel. That's obviously not correct.

And so scholars have kind of guessed, well, maybe he was 30, but that's just a guess. They get the 40 years from Acts chapter 13, verse 21, where we read that Saul ruled over Israel for 40 years. And so that would explain why some translations go with 40 in first Samuel 13, one NIV 42.

They must be assuming that the Acts statement is kind of a general rounded-off number. And then they're taking the two from the Hebrew text and adding to it. So, there's some uncertainty here.

We're not clear on how old was really when he began to reign and how long he reigned. But the Acts passage, since it is inspired scripture, suggests that he did rule for 40 years or thereabouts. But in this particular case, Saul has an army with him.

And Jonathan, who is Saul's son, Saul has a son at this point. Earlier he was a younger man, but now he has full-grown sons. So, some time has passed, it would seem.

And Jonathan does what Saul should have done back in chapter 10. If you recall, back in chapter 10, Samuel had given Saul the signs and he said, when the spirit comes upon you, do whatever your hand finds to do. And by the way, there's a Philistine outpost there.

And I think Samuel was strongly suggesting that Saul should have attacked that outpost. Instead, he didn't. He went up to worship at the high place, really didn't want to be king, and was very hesitant.

And so that the Philistine outpost never got attacked. But we read here in 1 Samuel 13 that Jonathan attacked the Philistine outpost that was at Geva. Now, some people will argue, well, the Philistine outpost that was mentioned back in chapter 10 was at Gibeah.

So maybe Geva and Gibeah are just alternate names for the same location. Or some will change the text to read Gibeah here. Others will say, no, Geva is a nearby location, but it's a different site.

I think the argument about the geography maybe is missing the point a little bit. The point is that Jonathan attacked the Philistine outpost in the vicinity. He did what Saul was supposed to have done.

And the Philistines hear about this. And Saul has the trumpet blown. And Israel hears the news, Saul has attacked the Philistine outpost.

Well, Saul didn't actually do that. Jonathan, his son, did. And now Israel has become obnoxious to the Philistines.

And so, there's a great concern among the Israelites that Jonathan has gotten them into a difficult situation here. And the people are summoned to join Saul at Gilgal. The Philistine army is assembling.

They have chariots, and soldiers as numerous as the sand on the seashore. The Philistine army is very intimidating and superior to the Israelite army. And so it looks like a very dire situation.

And Saul is remaining at Gilgal, and all the troops with him are quaking. They are shaking, trembling with fear. So, Saul has basically found himself in the situation that Samuel talked about way back in chapter 10.

Remember, Samuel wanted Saul, I think, to attack the Philistine outpost and then go to Gilgal and wait for him for seven days. And then he would come and tell Saul what to do, offer a sacrifice, and then tell Saul what he was to do next. That never happened.

And so, you might think, well, that's just gone by the board. That's not relevant anymore. But no, even though obviously some time has passed, Saul understands himself to be in this situation.

He realizes the Philistine outpost was attacked. Here I am at Gilgal. This is the situation that Samuel was talking about.

I think Samuel intended for all this to happen much earlier, as I said, but here we are in this situation. So, we know that he's supposed to wait seven days, and he does that. According to 1 Samuel 13, 8, he waited seven days, the time set by Samuel.

But Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and Saul's men began to scatter. So, Saul says to himself, or actually to others, bring me the burnt offering and the fellowship offerings. And Saul offered up the burnt offering.

Samuel had never given him permission to do this earlier. And wouldn't you know it, just as he finished making the offering, Samuel arrived, politely late probably by a few minutes. Samuel arrived and Saul went out to greet him.

And Samuel asks him, what have you done? And I think he probably said it that way. And Saul replied, well, when I saw the men were scattering and that you didn't come at the set time, notice how he puts this on to Samuel, and the Philistines were assembling at Michmash, in other words, my soldiers are going, the Philistines are really gearing up, and you're not here like you said you would be. I thought, now the Philistines will come against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the Lord's favor.

That sounds very pious, but it illustrates Saul's obsession with ritual and religion rather than obedience. So, I felt compelled to offer the burnt offering. So, he's justifying his actions here.

And I think we've got to think about this in a little more detail here because there are some real problems with Saul's attitude. I can think of three. Saul's viewpoint is flawed in at least three important ways.

Let's think about this. First, his concern about his dwindling forces. What does that indicate? Well, I think it indicates that he really believes that human armies, not the Lord, decide battles.

What does it really matter how many soldiers you have if the Lord is on your side? The Lord has demonstrated in the past his ability to win with very small numbers. In fact, sometimes he prefers it that way, as Gideon found out. And so, this shows that Saul's trust is in what he can see rather than the In other words, Saul is the kind of guy who walks by sight rather than faith.

Secondly, his concern with offering a sacrifice reveals a faulty theology that elevates ritual above obedience. He tends to think that he's only going to get the Lord's favor if he gives the Lord some kind of sacrifice. He needs to appease the Lord.

He needs to seek the Lord's favor. Maybe with the underlying assumption, which is often the case in the pagan worldview, that you can manipulate God into granting

you favor. If you give him the right thing, well, in return he will give you what you want.

So, I think Saul's thinking is flawed there. He elevates ritual above obedience. And thirdly, he oversteps his bounds.

He's the king, and he's under the authority of the prophet Samuel, who represents the Lord, who's the intercessor for the nation. And in his instructions to Saul back in chapter 10, Samuel made it clear he would offer the sacrifices. There's no indication or implication that a delay in Samuel's arrival suddenly gives Saul the permission, the right to do this.

And so, he, in many ways, is usurping the authority of the prophet priest, Samuel, at this point. So, there's plenty wrong with what Saul has done. And so it's no surprise that in verse 13, Samuel says to him, you have done a foolish thing.

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. And some people have a problem with that because they think, well, hadn't God decreed that David would be the king, that the king would come from Judah? I think we can harmonize that.

I'm not so sure that the earlier passage in Genesis 49 is to be understood as a decree. I think God is simply indicating what will happen. And I take his statement to Saul here at face value.

Saul could have had an everlasting dynasty. God, in his foreknowledge, knew that that wouldn't happen, that Saul would fail, and that that wouldn't happen. But I take this at face value.

This is a legitimate statement. You could have had a kingdom that would last, a dynasty that would last, but you have forfeited that because of your sin. It might seem a bit harsh punishment for what he has done, but I tried to show just a minute ago that there are some good reasons why Saul forfeits his dynasty here.

His lack of faith, his wrong focus on ritual, his lack of respect for the prophet-priest. But now your kingdom will not endure. The Lord has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him ruler of his people because you have not kept the Lord's command.

And by the way, the word ruler is Nagid here. It's not Melech. It's kind of a reminder to Saul, the king serves under me.

He's vice-regent. You don't get to just do whatever you want. You are under my authority and that means under the authority of the prophet as well.

Your kingdom is not going to endure. You're not going to have a dynasty. The Lord has sought out a man after his own heart.

Well, what does that mean? It's literally a man according to his heart. And I think it means someone whose heart, whose mind is in tune with what God is doing and who wants to accomplish the will of God. This is his primary concern.

Saul, it doesn't appear, is passionate about that, but this other person, and of course we're going to discover it's David. David is the one who is this man after God's own heart. That hasn't been revealed specifically yet at this point, but God has chosen this other one.

I think we get a little bit of insight, by the way, into what this expression means in chapter 14, verse 7. We're going to talk about this passage in a little more detail here in a minute, but in chapter 14, as we'll see, Jonathan is strategizing and he wants to attack the Philistines. He wants to ignite a battle and win a victory. And it's just him and his armor bearer and the Philistines have a garrison.

They have a force there, but he says, here's what we're going to do. If they challenge us to come over and fight them, we're going to do it. And the armor bearer says to Jonathan, do all that you have in mind, his armor-bearer said.

Go ahead. I am with you heart and soul is the way the NIV translates it, but literally it's, look, I am with you according to your heart. See, that's the same expression that was used back in chapter 13, where I have chosen a man according, the Lord has chosen a man according to his heart.

That is someone who is in tune with his will. And what is the armor bearer saying? He says, I am with you, according to your heart, what you will, I will, my will is in line with yours. And I march to the beat of your drum.

And so, I think that gives us insight into exactly what is meant back in chapter 13. Some people say that a man after his own heart simply means a man that God has chosen. There's more to it than that.

It's, God is going to choose someone who is in tune with his will. It's not some arbitrary choice that's being made. And actually, we referred to the Acts passage earlier, chapter 13, verse 21, which informs us that Saul ruled for 40 years, but you see in verse 22, as they're recalling this event, after removing Saul, he made David their king.

And God testified concerning him, I have found David, son of Jesse, a man after my own heart. He will do everything I want him to do. See, so in the Acts passage, we kind of get an explanation of what is meant by after my own heart.

It's not just whoever I choose. It's, I'm going to choose a person who is in line with my will. He will do everything I want him to do.

And so that's what I think is meant back here in chapter 13, verse 14. He's going to choose a man who is in tune with his will and wants to obey him in every way. And of course, David is going to be that individual.

Samuel also says he's appointed him ruler of his people because you have not kept the Lord's command. See, it's all about the Lord's will. Saul has not kept the Lord's command.

And so, the Lord has appointed this other individual to be the Nagid, the ruler. But it's interesting in Hebrew, the word translated appointed is actually the word command. And I think appointed is a good translation, but it's almost as if he has issued a formal decree that this person is going to be the ruler.

He has appointed him. And the key is it's a play on the word command back in verse 13. You don't see it in the English, in verse 14, but you do in 13.

You've done a foolish thing, Samuel says to Saul. 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.

But now your kingdom won't endure. The Lord has sought out a man after his own heart and commanded him to be ruler over his people because you have not kept the Lord's command. So, there's this play on the word command.

You have not kept the Lord's command. So, guess what? He has issued a command that someone else is going to replace you. See the irony there, the wordplay? It's hard to bring it out in translation sometimes, but it's present there in the Hebrew text.

And then Samuel left Gilgal and went up to Gibeah in Benjamin. And Saul counted the men who were with him and they numbered about 600. So, in this first major section of chapters 13 and 14, we see that Saul forfeits his dynasty.

And that can happen. God can have great plans for people, but it's not just a one-sided unilateral decree on God's part. People can forfeit their privilege and their blessing by foolishly disobeying the Lord's word.

That happened with Eli earlier in the story and it's happening with Saul here. To flesh that out a little bit more, we could say the Lord expects his chosen rulers to obey his prophetic command. And for New Testament believers, the Lord's prophetic command is scripture.

It's the New Testament scriptures written by apostles who were prophets. And we also see that disobedience can result in the loss of privilege and blessing. And it's very tragic in many ways.

So, Saul has forfeited his dynasty. He has not yet been told that he is going to be removed from kingship, but he has been told he's not going to have a continuing dynasty. That brings us to the next major section of chapters 13 and 14, which would begin in chapter 13 verse 16, and go through 14.23. And again, as I said before, Jonathan's faith ignites a victory.

The principle here is going to be faith in the Lord's great power can be the catalyst for his saving intervention. And in chapter 13 verse 16, we read Saul and his son Jonathan. Now, Jonathan has been mentioned before, and we know Jonathan is Saul's son, but here the text specifically calls him that.

And I think that there's a purpose for drawing attention to the fact that he is his son, because what has Saul just lost? His dynasty. And that has implications for his son, Jonathan. As the section progresses, we're going to be troubled by this because we're going to discover that Jonathan, unlike his father, would have made a great king.

He has the kind of faith in the Lord that the king of Israel needs to have. And this is why Jonathan and the early David, the young David, become such good friends. They share that commitment to the Lord.

And so, it's kind of tragic when you read Saul and his son, Jonathan, because what the prophet has just said has implications for Saul's son, Jonathan. Jonathan, of course, is the one who attacked the Philistine outpost. We're going to skip over some passages here.

There's one section that tells us that the Philistines kind of had a monopoly on the weapon industry at this point. So, the Israelites are really at a disadvantage here. Philistines have a strong military force.

They're well-equipped. And we read in 1 Samuel 13, 22, on the day of battle, not a soldier with Saul and Jonathan had a sword or spear in his hand. Only Saul and his son, Jonathan, had them.

So we're not expecting a whole lot from the Israelite army in this battle. But in the context of this approaching battle, we come to chapter 14, verse 1. One day Jonathan, son of Saul, they were being reminded of that, said to his young armor-bearer, come, let's go over to the Philistine outpost on the other side. But he didn't tell his father.

Saul was staying on the outskirts of Gibeah. He's back there. And by the way, Saul, according to chapter 14, verse 3, is a fellow by the name of Ahijah, who was wearing an ephod.

Who is he? Well, he's a priest. He was a son of Ithabod's brother, Ahitub, son of Phineas, the son of Eli, the Lord's priest in Shiloh. No one was aware that Jonathan had left.

See the significance here? Right alongside Saul, who has forfeited his dynasty, is Achia, who is a descendant of Eli, the priest who had forfeited his dynasty. And what we see is, as we read through Samuel, there are parallels sometimes between Eli and Saul, the individuals who forfeited their dynasty by not showing respect for the Lord. They kind of go together.

And anyway, Jonathan, however, is willing and ready to ignite something with the Philistines. And the Philistines are up there. And as Jonathan says to his young armor-bearer, come, let's go over to the outpost of those uncircumcised men.

Perhaps the Lord will act on our behalf. Jonathan is very much tuned in to what the Lord is doing, but he recognizes God's sovereignty. He uses the Hebrew word *ulai*, perhaps.

Perhaps the Lord will act on our behalf. We're not going to assume anything, but maybe he will. Nothing can hinder the Lord from saving, whether by many or by few.

So, his attitude is different than his father's. His father was worried about dwindling forces. His father was thinking in terms of what you see, not what the Lord can do.

Jonathan's totally different. He sees the Philistines up there, and he says, let's go over there. Let's start something with these guys.

Maybe the Lord will act in our behalf. We can't be sure, but let's just do it. Because nothing can hinder the Lord.

Just in case, armor bearer, you wanted to say, but there's only two of us, it doesn't matter. It really doesn't matter. The Lord can save by many.

The Lord can save by few. So, the armor-bearer, to his credit, we looked at this passage before, do all that you have in mind, his armor-bearer said. Go ahead.

I'm with you, heart and soul. Literally, I am with you according to your heart. Your will is my will.

We're one on this. And so, Jonathan said, come on, we'll cross over toward them and let them see us. So, we're going to appear.

We're going to step out. We're going to be seen. And if they say to us, wait there until we come to you, we'll stay where we are and not go up to them.

It's almost as if Jonathan is setting up this as there's going to be a fight one way or the other. If they say, wait, we're coming down, we'll wait for them. But if they say, come up to us, now you might be thinking at this point, well, Jonathan would be at a tremendous disadvantage if he's got to climb up to where they're at.

So maybe he's going to say, well, if they say we're come down to you, we'll stay and fight. But if they say climb up, well, we'll know the Lord's not in it and we'll retreat because that would really be stupid to try to climb up the cliff and then have them waiting for us there. But if they say come up to us, we'll climb up because that will be our sign that the Lord has given them into our hands.

I mean, isn't this great? I mean, Jonathan is basically saying if it seems impossible, armor-bearer, that'll be a sign that the Lord's in it because if they challenge us, the Lord will give us a great victory. So, both of them showed themselves to the Philistine outpost. Look, the Philistines said, the Hebrews, often in the Old Testament when foreigners refer to Israelites, they call them Hebrews.

The Hebrews are crawling out of the holes they were hiding in. We were told earlier that many of the Israelites were so afraid they were hiding out in holes until maybe all of this passed. The men of the outpost shouted to Jonathan and his armor-bearer, come up to us and we'll teach you a lesson.

So, the sign has been fulfilled. And so, Jonathan said to his armor-bearer, climb up after me. The Lord has given them into the hand of Israel.

And notice Jonathan sees himself as the agent of Israel. This isn't just bravado, Jonathan trying to be a hero or something like that, too much testosterone or something like that. He sees himself as the agent of Israel.

And that's why I think he's so confident. He's not just fighting for Jonathan or Jonathan's glory. He's fighting for God's people.

And he understands that the Lord wants to protect his people. And notice the language, the way it's translated, has given them. In the Hebrew text, the verb form that's used indicates completed action from the standpoint of the speaker.

It sometimes is called the prophetic perfect. I prefer to call it the perfect of certitude. Sometimes for rhetorical effect, speakers will use the verb form.

It's as if it's already happened. It's as good as done. And so, notice the Lord has already given them into the hand of Israel.

And so, he's anticipating the victory that Israel will experience as this all unfolds. And so, Jonathan climbs up using his hands and feet. Yeah, you would.

But notice he's got to use his hands and feet to get up. It's that steep. And with his armor-bearer right behind him, the Philistines fell before Jonathan.

And his armor-bearer followed and killed behind him. So the picture I see is Jonathan's going through and he's hacking away at Philistines and the armor bearers coming along and finishing them off. In that first attack, Jonathan and his armor-bearer killed some 20 men in an area of about half an acre.

And then panic struck the whole army, those in the camp and field, and those in the outposts and raiding parties. And the ground shook. Earlier, the Israelites were trembling and shaking.

Now it's the Philistines who are afraid. And it was a panic sent by God. So Jonathan understands what's going on here.

And he realizes that this is really the Lord's battle. And he has ignited a victory. And already the enemy is in total panic mode.

And so you would expect the Israelite army, when they see this, to say, hey, something's going on here. The Lord is at work. Let's attack.

And Saul's lookout, said Gibeah, saw the army melting away in all directions. And then Saul said to the men who were with him, muster the forces and see who has left us. Somebody must have gone down there and started something.

And when they did, it was Jonathan and his armor-bearer who were not there. So, when they lined up and did roll call, no Jonathan, no armor bearer. And Saul said to Achia, bring the ark of God.

Remember, Achia is the descendant of Eli, the priest who is responsible for the holy things. And at that time, it was with the Israelites. Okay.

There's a problem here because the ark of the Lord at this point in time seems to have been, based on our study of other passages, some distance away. It was probably six miles away at Kiryat Jearim, according to 1 Samuel 7:2. And that would take a while to go and get the ark and bring it. And it's probably a better reading here to read Ephod or ephod.

That's what the Septuagint has. Josephus also has that reading. That Bible translation went with it.

It would make more sense for a priest to have an ephod. And an ephod is what you use to kind of get a word from God. It's kind of like a garment that they would use for these purposes.

And so, ark of God may be a secondary reading, a misinterpretation that has gotten into the Hebrew text. I think we might be better to go with the reading ephod here. It makes better sense, especially with the verb bring.

And then in the next verse, we're talking about withdrawing your hand. So Saul is talking to the priest. The tumult in the Philistine camp is increasing more and more, according to verse 19.

And so Saul says to the priest, withdraw your hand. But do you see what's going on here? Jonathan has ignited this battle. The Philistines are in complete panic mode.

It's a panic sent from God. Saul sees it. And before he is willing to attack, he's got to do the religious ritual thing.

He's got to do something with the ark or probably the ephod. We've got to get a word from God, *achia*, to find out if God wants us to attack or whatever.

But the Philistines' panic is just becoming so great that Saul eventually just calls it off. But this is so typical of Saul. Ritual before spiritual sensitivity and obedience.

So, Saul and all his men assemble, and they find the Philistines in total confusion, striking each other with their swords, according to verse 20. Some of the Hebrews who had been afraid, came and joined the Israelite forces, and the Israelites won a great battle. And in verse 23 we read, on that day, the Lord saved Israel.

And then the battle moved on beyond Beth-Avon. So, this is the second major section in here, where faith ignites a victory. Jonathan's faith ignites this victory.

And we are reminded that it is the Lord who is the source of victory. It's not in armies, it's not in ritual. And so, faith in the Lord's great power can be the catalyst for his saving intervention.

It's Jonathan's faith that is the catalyst for what the Lord does here. And the Lord is an invincible warrior and can deliver by many or by a few. And that's a great statement from Jonathan that shows up elsewhere in tradition.

One of my favorite expressions of this theme is not in the canonical scriptures, at least as we Protestants see them. It's in the book of 1 Maccabees. Maccabees is telling how Judas Maccabeus, in the second century BC, is leading a small force out to face the powerful Syrian army.

And his men ask, how can we, few as we are, fight against so great and strong a multitude? 1 Maccabees 3.17. And Judas responds this way, it is easy for many to be hemmed in by a few, for in the sight of heaven there is no difference between saving by many or by a few. It is not on the size of the army that victory in battle depends, but strength comes from heaven. And then Judas attacks the Syrians and routs them.

That sentiment expressed by Judas Maccabeus is rooted in what we see here in this passage in 1 Samuel 14 where Jonathan wins this great victory over the Philistine army because he recognizes it's not about numbers with the Lord. If the Lord is with you, you are more powerful than your enemy. And that's the second major section of this episode.

The third one is not quite as exciting and happy. It's chapter 14 verses 24 through 52, which I call Saul dilutes a victory. And what we see here is that a preoccupation with your own honor can dilute divine blessing.

Saul sees what's happening and he decides, yeah, we need to really get after these Philistines and finalize this victory today. And he does something very foolish. Again, which kind of reflects the underlying mentality that what we do is most important.

If we don't enter into the battle with zeal, we won't win. The Israelites were in distress that day because Saul had bound the people under an oath saying, cursed be anyone who eats food before evening comes before I have avenged myself on my enemies. So, none of the troops tasted food.

Do you see what Saul is saying here is we're not going to eat. We're going to commit ourselves to not eating until every Philistine is wiped out until I get my vengeance on my enemies. He's obviously looking at a personal vendetta or something like that here.

Completely different from Jonathan. Remember, Jonathan realized that if they invite us up there to do the impossible, we'll know that the Lord is going to save Israel. Jonathan understands it's all about the Lord.

And this contrast that I'm developing between Jonathan and Saul is really important. Jonathan is what we call a foil in literary works. A foil, is a character who is there for purposes of contrast with another character.

And it's kind of tragic because Jonathan would have made a great king. He would have been the next in line to be the king after Saul. And he ends up just kind of being reduced to a foil.

In the story, he shows us what Saul should have been and I believe could have been if he had trusted in the Lord the way his son Jonathan did. But that didn't help. So mainly in the story, Jonathan is there to help us appreciate just how bad Saul is.

There's this contrast. If you think in terms of foils and how they work, the book of Jonah, remember the sailors in the book of Jonah, when they encounter the Lord in the storm, they fear the Lord. And they are very willing to do whatever the Lord wants them to do when they're sacrificing.

And they fear the Lord with a great fear, the text says. In contrast to Jonah, who doesn't really fear the Lord. When the Lord says, I want you to go to Nineveh and preach out against them, what does Jonah do? He goes in the opposite direction.

Not because he's afraid necessarily, but because he hates the Ninevites and doesn't want to be a part of their reclamation. But whatever his motive, he disobeys the Lord. The sailors are foils.

They show how you should properly respond to the Lord when he reveals his will to you. Later, the king of Nineveh is a foil. He responds properly when he hears Jonah's message.

He repents. Jonah just sits there and pouts and complains. So, a foil is a character that is there for purposes of contrast.

The sailors are a foil for Jonah. In the book of Ruth, Orpah is a foil for Ruth. When the girls are heading back with Naomi, Naomi says, you don't want to continue with me.

I can't help you out in the future. She of course is very short-sighted. Orpah goes back and Ruth stays.

And it's not in that case, it's not that Orpah is a bad person because Naomi called a blessing down on her. She said, you have been faithful to me, and may the Lord bless

you. But Naomi's argument just convinces I think, Orpah that, yeah, there's no future for me back in Israel.

So, I need to go home. Orpah does what you'd expect. If Orpah is good, Ruth is beyond good.

She's great. And she stays with Naomi. So Orpah is a foil for Ruth.

Sometimes the foil can be negative, positive, or in between. And so, Jonathan is a foil for Saul here. So Saul has basically called a curse down.

He's basically asking God to judge anyone who eats before Saul has gotten his vengeance on the Philistines. So none of the troops tasted food. The entire army enters the woods, according to verse 25, and there's honey on the ground.

They see the honey oozing out, but no one puts his hand to his mouth because they're afraid of the oath. We can't eat. Jonathan hadn't heard about this.

He's off doing his thing. Jonathan had not heard that his father had bound the people with the oath. And so, he comes up, and you kind of wish someone would have told him, no, no, Jonathan, don't do that.

But instead, he reached out the end of his staff that was in his hand, and he dipped it into the honeycomb. And he raised his hand to his mouth, and his eyes brightened. This natural honey perked him up.

It gave him renewed energy. And then one of the soldiers told him, you know, again, why not before rather than after? Your father bound the army under a strict oath, saying, cursed be anyone who eats food today. And that is why the men are faint.

And Jonathan hears this, and he says, my father has made trouble for the country. See how my eyes brightened when I tasted a little of this honey? What we need is some energy here. How much better it would have been if the men had eaten today some of the plunder they took from their enemies? Would not the slaughter of the Philistines have been even greater? So Jonathan is a man of great faith who charged up the cliff to fight the Philistines, just him and his armor bearer.

He's trusting in the Lord, but he's also a practical person. And he realizes, yeah, if we're going to chase Philistines down, we need some strength. Why in the world would my father do this? That day, after the Israelites had struck down the Philistines from Michmash to Aijalon, they were exhausted.

And eventually, they break, they crack. They pounced on the plunder. So, they've fought hard, and they simply need food at this point.

They're starving. And taking sheep, cattle, and calves, they butchered them on the ground and ate them together with the blood. Now they're violating the Old Testament law of ritual purity.

They're eating meat along with the blood. You're not supposed to do this. And so, Saul's stupid vow has brought his people, I mean, they're still responsible for their behavior, but it's brought the people to this, to the point where they're disobeying the Lord.

Saul was the catalyst for this. Then someone said to Saul, look, the men are sinning against the Lord by eating meat that has blood in it. You have broken faith, he said.

Roll a large stone over here at once. See Saul's obsession with ritual and all of this. Then he said, go out among the men and tell them, each of you bring me your cattle and sheep and slaughter them here and eat them.

Do not sin against the Lord by eating meat with blood still in it. So, we're going to drain the blood off before we eat meat. So, everyone brought his ox that night and slaughtered it there.

Then Saul built an altar to the Lord. It was the first time he'd done this. So, Saul then says, let's go down and pursue the Philistines by night and plunder them until dawn, and let us not leave one of them alive.

He's still obsessed with wiping out the Philistines. We know what's motivating this, his desire for revenge against the Philistines, who I'm sure had brought him a lot of humiliation. I could just hear Israelites probably saying during Saul's time, how come Saul doesn't defeat these guys? And so, this is his opportunity.

Do whatever seems best to you, they replied. But the priest said, let us inquire of God here. So, Saul asked, Saul's always ready for this kind of thing.

So, Saul asked God, shall I go down and pursue the Philistines? Will you give them into Israel's hand? But God did not answer him that day. Saul therefore said, come here, all you who are leaders of the army, and let us find out what sin has been committed today. Maybe in his mind, it's the men who have sinned because of what they did.

As surely as the Lord who rescues Israel lives, even if the guilt lies with my son Jonathan, he must die. And Saul at this point, I don't think realizes what Jonathan had done, but not one of them said a word. So, before we chase the Philistines anymore, we've got to figure out why the Lord isn't answering our request.

Saul then said to all the Israelites, you stand over there, I and Jonathan, my son will stand over here. Do what seems best to you, they replied. Then Saul prayed to the Lord, the God of Israel.

Why have you not answered your servant today? If the fault is in me or my son Jonathan, respond with Urim. But if the men of Israel are at fault, respond with Thummim. You remember the Urim and Thummim, which was a device that was used by the Israelites to determine God's will and get answers in situations like this.

So, you know, I envisioned them being in a bag and if you pull the one marked Urim out, that means party A. If you pull the other one out, that means party B. Jonathan and Saul were taken by lot and the men were cleared. Saul said, cast the lot between me and Jonathan, my son. And Jonathan was taken.

Then Saul said to Jonathan, tell me what you've done. So, Jonathan told him, I tasted a little honey with the end of my staff and now I must die. And there's a little uncertainty as to what the tone of Jonathan's statement is here.

Probably sarcastic. And now I must die for that? And Saul said, may God deal with me, be it ever so severely, if you do not die, Jonathan. So, Saul calls a curse down upon himself if he doesn't kill his own son for violating a stupid, unwise vow that he made the army take that Jonathan was unaware of.

But notice what happens here in verse 45. The men said to Saul, should Jonathan die? He who has brought about this great deliverance in Israel? Never. As surely as the Lord lives, not a head of his hair will fall to the ground for he did this today with God's help.

They understand what's happened and they're not going to let Saul execute the hero of the day. So, the men rescued Jonathan and he was not put to death. And so you could read that as just they stepped in and wouldn't let Saul execute him.

But in the Hebrew text, it's not one of the more common words for save or rescue, it's pada. And pada can sometimes just mean rescue or deliver, but it can also mean to redeem, to pay a price for someone. And so, one theory here is that the men not only stepped in and kept Saul from killing Jonathan, but they took a collection and basically paid the ransom price, which you can do in these kinds of situations with broken oaths and broken vows.

The Lord is just kind of silent through all of this. But it's very, very tragic because it should remind us of an earlier incident in history, back in the book of Judges, where Jephthah was getting ready to go out and fight the enemy. And he presented his case and demonstrated that he was in the right and the enemy was in the wrong.

This is in Judges chapters 10 and 11. And then, having presented his case and committed it to the Lord as judge, he then turns around and says to the Lord, by the way, Lord, if you give me the victory in the upcoming battle, I'll give you a human sacrifice. Little did he realize it was going to be his own daughter.

I think he probably envisioned someone else, but I'll give you a sacrifice. And what he's doing at that point, he's trying to bribe the judge. And he has an airtight case.

He's in the right, but he just wants to make sure, because of his lack of faith, he wants to make sure that the Lord decides for him. And so, he's pagan in his thinking. This is the Judges' period.

He's bought into some pagan thinking. And so, he's thinking, hey, I'll give the Lord the ultimate sacrifice. Well, remember what happened.

He arrives home and his daughter, the first thing that comes out the door, I will offer as a sacrifice. And maybe he thought it would be an animal. There's some ambiguity in the language, maybe another person.

But obviously the language was flexible enough to include a human being because he feels compelled to offer his daughter. His daughter comes out, he goes, oh no, I didn't think you'd be the one. And then he, in my opinion, there's debate among those who study Judges, I think he offered his daughter as a whole burnt offering to the Lord.

I don't think there's any way to escape that conclusion. This is reminiscent of this. It's Saul trying to ensure a victory by pronouncing this curse on his army if they don't follow through and defeat the Philistines.

And he jeopardizes the life of his own son, Jonathan. But fortunately for Israel and for Jonathan, the Israelite army stepped in and rescued Jonathan, whatever that entailed. Saul then stopped pursuing the Philistines and they withdrew to their own land.

And then there's kind of a summary of what Saul did after that. And he, to his credit, did win victories over Israel as their king. And then there's kind of a section that talks about Saul's family a little bit, that's giving us information that will be helpful for the rest of the story.

And it's kind of just creating a little bit of a barrier between this and the next literary unit, which is 1st Samuel 15. So, in this third section, we see that Saul dilutes the great victory that Jonathan had brought about. And there are lessons here.

Again, a preoccupation with one's own honor can dilute divine blessing. God wants to bless us as his servants, but sometimes we get so self-focused and get preoccupied with our own honor rather than what God is trying to accomplish and his kingdom program, that we can dilute the blessings that God wants to bring our way. We get so self-obsessed.

When you get self-obsessed, there's going to be conflict with people, and we see that in this story. And also, a preoccupation with religious formalism. In Saul's case, it was curses and sacrifices and those kinds of things, especially in the form of rash vows or oaths, can inhibit the work of God.

So, an interesting account here in 1st Samuel 13 and 14, just to review real quick, Saul forfeits his dynasty because of his disobedience. We then ironically see Saul's son, the one who would have been king, a man of great faith, igniting a great victory. The Lord wins a great victory for Israel.

But then Saul, kind of diluting all of that through his preoccupation with getting vengeance for himself, and in the process of doing so, bringing his own son to the place where he was ready to execute him. And fortunately, the Israelite army stepped in. In the next lesson, we'll be looking at chapter 15, and things are going to just get worse for Saul.

He's already forfeited his dynasty in chapter 15. He is going to disobey the Lord again, and in this case, the Lord informs him, that you are personally going to be removed as king. You're not going to finish out your reign.

So, we'll look at that passage in our next lesson.

This is Dr. Bob Chisholm in his teaching on 1 and 2 Samuel. This is session 9, 1 Samuel 13-14. Saul Forfeits a Dynasty, Jonathan's Faith Ignites a Victory, and Saul Dilutes a Victory.