



*Honing in on the Heart!’ Sermon Series*

**Sermon #25:**

**‘Sin in the Camp!’**

Wednesday, September 11th, 2024

**Last week in ‘Honing in on the Heart:**

- Last week we had our RA/GA recognition night, so we weren’t in 1st Samuel during Midweek Worship.
  - But tonight, we get to pick back up in our ‘Honing in on the Heart!’ sermon series.
- Two weeks ago when we were in 1st Samuel, I preached from *1st Samuel 14:24-35* with a sermon entitled ‘*Our Own Words and Actions can Wreck Our Own Family!*’
  - I asked the question: *How does Saul’s own words and actions show us how easy it can be to wreck our own family’s when we prioritize our own agenda over God’s will?*
    - **Point 1: *Saul’s Own Selfishness. (V. 24)***

- **Point 2: *Saul’s Son has a Situation. (V. 25-30)***
- **Point 3: *Saul’s Selfishness led the Soldiers to Sin. (V. 31-35)***

- Based on this message from two weeks ago, how has God convicted you that your own words and actions can hurt your family for generations?
  - *Don’t let your own selfishness blind you...*

*‘Sin in the Camp!’*

*1st Samuel 14:36-46*

**Sermon in a Sentence:**

*We can find Sin in the Camp in the life of King Saul as we see the Lord is Silent, the Leaders are Summoned, the Lots are Started, Saul is Livid, and Loyalty is Shown.*

**Intro:**

- When a person is willing to see and have their own son killed, it can be quite revealing into the heart of that particular parent.
  - *This is the case of what we find of Saul this evening.*
- ***I’ve entitled tonight’s sermon, ‘Sin in the Camp!’.***
  - Just 2 weeks ago we looked at the oath that King Saul made how his son (Jonathan), broke that Oath by eating honey in the forrest while chasing the enemy (not knowing the oath existed).

- *While It's possible to think that the title of my message is alluding to the 'sin' of Johnathan, I mean it as the sin in Saul's heart.*

- When there is sin in the camp of our lives (even in our families), it's hard for God to be able to move, because He cannot tolerate sin.

- *Which is why it's important that we spend time with Him each day, confessing and repenting of our sin, asking Him to forgive us.*

- What we find this evening is that Saul was so much more focused on the 'sin' that his son committed based on the foolish oath that Saul himself enacted.

- *Being fully aware that his son was not aware of the oath...*

- So, what I believe we find here in this text this evening is that Saul seeks to shift the blame of sin in the camp on his son, so that no one will see the boiling selfishness and seeking of self advancement that Saul is obviously guilty of.

- *Doesn't Saul sound so much like us in our fleshly human nature?*

- *Oftentimes when we've done wrong, it's easier for us to personally shift the blame onto others, than to personally admit what we have done wrong in a particular situation.*

- So as we study this text tonight following the oath and eating of the honey that occurred in 1st Samuel 14:24-35, let's make sure that we don't fall into the temptation of looking into the camp of others.

- *Focus in on your camp, asking the Lord if there's any sin in your camp tonight...*

*\*Read 1st Samuel 14:36-46\**

#### **Question to Ask:**

*What occurs in the passage to show us that there was sin present in the camp of Israel?*

#### **Point 1: *The Lord is Silent. (V. 36-37)***

- 'Then Saul said, "Let us go down after the Philistines by night and plunder them until the morning light; let us not leave a man of them." And they said, "Do whatever seems good to you." But the priest said, "Let us draw near to God here." 37 And Saul inquired of God, "Shall I go down after the Philistines? Will you give them into the hand of Israel?" But he did not answer him that day.' 1st Samuel 14:36-37

- *These verses follow what Jonathan had already said about his father and Saul and his decision to make an oath about fasting during the heat of battle.*

- 'Then Jonathan said, "My father has troubled the land. See how my eyes have become bright because I tasted a little of

this honey. **30** How much better if the people had eaten freely today of the spoil of their enemies that they found. For now the defeat among the Philistines has not been great.” 1 Samuel 14:29-30

- ***Johnathan had pointed out the fact that Israel had missed out on military advancement and the spoils of war, because Saul had enacted this oath.***

- As I mentioned two weeks ago, I do believe that Saul did this on purpose to personally destroy his son.
  - ***Saul never sent anyone else out to inform his son, and knew his son would not be aware of the oath.***
- ***But, even with that being said, while Saul was a very ungodly man, the oath that Saul made in the name of the Lord, was technically scripturally legitimate.***
  - And because it was legitimate, Jonathan would technically be killed for violating the oath that his father made.
    - ***So yes, in a way, Jonathan has sin in the camp, but he was set up. The real sin here is Saul's concealment and attempt to trap and ultimately terminate his son.***

- But even in this, we are going to see the Lord fight for Johnathan with the people backing him up.

- ***In these verses, we see that the Lord is silent after Saul's request to go and fight the Philistines again...***
  - I believe we find **2** things to point out concerning the Lord's Silence.
- ***Attempt at Amending a Mistake. (V. 36a)***
  - ‘Then Saul said, “Let us go down after the Philistines by night and plunder them until the morning light; let us not leave a man of them.” And they said, “Do whatever seems good to you.” But the priest said, “Let us draw near to God here.” 1st Samuel 14:36
  - ***Johnathan had pointed out the fact that the Oath Saul had created limited the amount of spoils the Israelites could get from the Philistines because they couldn't eat. No food, no energy.***
    - It almost seems to me that Saul is wanting to make amends for what he knows was a selfish and brutal mistake.
      - ***So, Saul suggests a night raid, and soldiers agreed to this because now that they got a taste of the spoils of war, they are going to want more.***

- See how manipulative Saul is?
- ***The idea that Saul proposes to attack at night was a common practice in the ancient world.***
  - The soldiers at this time either think Saul really does have their best interest at heart, or they want more spoils from war. Probably a mixture of both.
- ***Either way, they agree to Saul's desire to fight... but not so fast...***
- ***Ahijah's Authority Reminds Saul. (V. 36b-37)***
  - But the priest said, "Let us draw near to God here." 37 And Saul inquired of God, "Shall I go down after the Philistines? Will you give them into the hand of Israel?" But he did not answer him that day.' 1st Samuel 14:36b-37
  - Due to the mention of Ahijah in 1st Samuel 14:3, most scholars believe that ***THE*** priest mentioned here (also singular in Hebrew text), was Ahijah.
    - ***Ahijah see's the need for the people to inquire of God whether or not they were to go into battle, because this is what the Lord required anyway (although Saul often ignored this).***
  - ***Due to the reference of Urim and Thummim later in the text in verse 41, most scholars agree that Aijah probably used the Urim and Thummim to seek an answer from the Lord.***
- ***Sidenote: what are Urim and Thummim?***
  - According to Exodus 28:15-30, these two objects would be used by the priests in order to determine God's will on a certain situation.
- ***We don't know that they were used here in verse 37, but they were later on in verse 41.***
  - ***Either way, Saul inquired of the Lord, and the Lord did not answer Him.***
- ***Although you and I often forget this when we attempt to 'twist' the arm of God, the Lord is not obligated to respond.***
  - The Lord can be and is often silent.
- David E. Garland said this about Saul ***'Much later, after his rejection by God, Saul would understand that no approach or technique, however authorized in other contexts, would bring a divine response, however desperate his need.'***
  - This will be seen when Saul goes to the witch of Endor.
- Remember back to ***1st Samuel 8:18***, when Samuel told the people that a king would cause problems?
  - 'And in that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves, but the LORD will

not answer you in that day.” 1st Samuel 8:18

- Here, the Lord is not answering them because of sin in the camp.
  - *There’s much debate on what this silence from God meant.*
    - *It could be silence because Jonathan broke the oath, but I personally believe it has more to do with the fact that Saul is sinning in his heart with all this in trying to manipulate his people (and using God in the process) to kill his son. God sees. God knows.*
- *Is this the sole reason God was silent that day, I’m not sure, but I definitely think it was a contributing factor, all though Saul is going to deflect the blame elsewhere.*

**Point 2: *The Leaders are Summoned. (V. 38-39)***

- ‘And Saul said, “Come here, all you leaders of the people, and know and see how this sin has arisen today. 39 For as the LORD lives who saves Israel, though it be in Jonathan my son, he shall surely die.” But there was not a man among all the people who answered him.’
- *What is so interesting here, is that Saul does not connect the dots that in 1st Samuel 13:14, Samuel had just announced that Saul’s Royal line will not*

*continue and think that they may have a part to do with God’s silence to him.*

- Instead, he thinks it’s due to ‘sin in the camp’, but notice, not his own sin, but that of his son.
- *See that’s exactly what sin can do to you and I if we are not careful.*
  - It can blind us to the point that we think and feel there is no wrong that we can do, and that it is always someone else’s fault.
  - May we remember what Jesus Himself said in the NT concerning this very thing:
    - *‘You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye.’ Matthew 7:5*
- So, Saul calls the leaders of Israel, which were probably non-Levites and military leaders of the army. Similar to what occurs in [Nehemiah 11:1](#).
  - There are two things that we need to look at that occurs when the Leaders of Israel are summoned.
- *The Terms of a Trial are Set. (V. 38-39a)*
  - ‘And Saul said, “Come here, all you leaders of the people, and know and see how this sin has arisen today. 39 For as the LORD lives who saves

Israel, though it be in Jonathan my son, he shall surely die.”

- **Saul reveals here that he believes God is not answering Him because there is sin within the camp.**
  - Notice that the text does not say anything about Saul taking time to reflect, seeing if he was an issue, but that the issue was elsewhere.
    - **One of the tell tall signs that sin is in your camp, is the reality that you don't think you're the issue.**
- **So Saul lets the people know that they are going to have a 'trial' of sorts, and this will go down in verses 40-42, where for the second time in this text, lots are used to determine a matter.**
  - We've discussed the use of lots in the Bible before, and [Proverbs 16:33](#) backs this idea up that was used in OT times...
    - 'The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.'
    - **Lots were used to figure out the Lord's will...**
- Saul makes it clear that whoever is guilty of this sin in the camp, will be put to death, even if it is his own son, Johnathan.

■ **Keep in mind I feel that this is what Saul wanted from the beginning.**

- I think (though the scriptures don't come out and say it), that he wanted his son dead because Johnathan had been outspoken against his dad and was loved and respected (as we will see).
- **John L. Mackay said 'Perhaps his mention of Jonathan indicates existing tension between them.'**
  - While Saul doesn't know yet that his son ate the honey, he does know that his son wasn't aware of the Oath.
    - **Common sense would indicate that Saul had a good hunch his son had disobeyed the oath, and he's going to try to go after him...**
- **The Terms are Met with Silence. (V. 39b)**
  - 'But there was not a man among all the people who answered him.'
  - Perhaps the soldiers of the army are feeling this tension and realize the potential for what's about to go down...
    - **God was silent, and now Saul's people are silent...**
      - Scholar John Woodhouse said **'The very thing that his oath**

*had been designed to avoid, namely, the desertion of his people, had happened—perhaps not literally, but he had certainly lost their hearts.’*

- I would even add that Saul lost their respect.
- Silence speaks volumes, and I sure Saul realizes that they might not actually be ‘with him’, anymore.

**Point 3: *The Lots are Started. (V. 40-42)***

- ‘Then he said to all Israel, “You shall be on one side, and I and Jonathan my son will be on the other side.” And the people said to Saul, “Do what seems good to you.” **41** Therefore Saul said, “O LORD God of Israel, why have you not answered your servant this day? If this guilt is in me or in Jonathan my son, O LORD, God of Israel, give Urim. But if this guilt is in your people Israel, give Thummim.”<sup>[i]</sup> And Jonathan and Saul were taken, but the people escaped. **42** Then Saul said, “Cast the lot between me and my son Jonathan.” And Jonathan was taken.’
- *Now, the process of the lots being casted have been started.*
  - *Now we see in verse 40, that Jonathan has been brought into the picture...*
- The process begins in verse 40 with Saul separating himself and Jonathan from the leaders of the army...

- They are placed on one side, while the army of Israel is on the other.
  - *What’s happening here?*
    - *Saul wants to figure out whether the issues going on in Israel are on himself or Johnathan, or on the soldiers.*
- Scholar Robert D. Bergen does point out that what Saul is doing here is normal to tradition in Israel (ancient cultures) at this time:
  - *‘Initially a trial by lot was conducted to see if the sin lay with the royal family or the army of Israel.’*
- *While this might have been ‘protocol’, I think Saul thinks he knows where this is going, he is clearly targeting his son.*
  - Part of me thinks that deep down, Saul may know that his heart and actions are wrong. To reflect on someone other than himself, he’s willing to have his son killed.
    - *This is truly an example of the effect that sin can have in our lives if we are not careful.*
- Saul’s words that he utters here, show me 2 specific things about what sin can do to you and I, if we aren’t careful...
- *Sin can make us Pushy and Expectational. (V. 41)*

- ‘Therefore Saul said, “O LORD God of Israel, why have you not answered your servant this day? If this guilt is in me or in Jonathan my son, O LORD, God of Israel, give Urim. But if this guilt is in your people Israel, give Thummim.”[i] And Jonathan and Saul were taken, but the people escaped.’
  - This verse in the Hebrew Masoretic Text can be quite tricky.
    - ***The ESV version that we are reading from tonight, follows the traditional Septuagint (OT in Greek), which has Saul saying ‘why have you not answered your servant this day?’***
  - While I don’t always agree on the NIV’s translation, when reading verse 41 in Hebrew, I think they got it as accurate as we can:
    - ***‘Then Saul prayed to the Lord, the God of Israel, ‘Give me the right answer.’***
  - ***Saul wants God to give him the answer that he wants to hear.***
    - Which to Saul, would be the ‘right’ answer.
  - While verse 41 is very hard to translate with the Hebrew text we find there, I think we see that Saul is pushy and expectational on HOW he wants God to answer.
- ***In our study so far in 1st Samuel, Saul doesn’t voluntarily go to God and worship and serve Him voluntarily.***
    - No, Saul goes to God when he needs something. Like many of us are.
  - ***The end of verse 41 shows us that Saul and Johnathan were taken because the lot fell on them...***
    - The people/soldiers of Israel may be in the clear, but they are still tense and nervous.
  - ***Sin makes us think someone else is the Problem, not us. (V. 42)***
    - ‘Then Saul said, “Cast the lot between me and my son Jonathan.” And Jonathan was taken.’
    - The way this scene develops is tragic due to the effect sin has...
      - ***Back in 1st Samuel 10:20-24, Saul was affirmed as Israel’s king by this same process of casing lots, and the same process was also used in Joshua 7:16-18 where Achan was identified as the thief.***
    - ***Now this same process is being used against the King’s Son for a crime that he committed without even knowing or realizing he was committing a crime.***



- Jonathan is identified as Israel's problem, and it's all shaking out the way Saul intended it to, for now...

**Point 4: *The Livid Saul. (V. 43-44)***

- 'Then Saul said to Jonathan, "Tell me what you have done." And Jonathan told him, "I tasted a little honey with the tip of the staff that was in my hand. Here I am; I will die." 44 And Saul said, "God do so to me and more also; you shall surely die, Jonathan."

- *Now, in studying for this sermon I've asked myself the question, why did God not bring the truth out and let the lot fall on Saul for creating such a manipulating oath to target his son in the first place?*

- I agree with what W.W. said when he answered this difficult question:
  - *'He (God) wanted to bring the whole thing out in the open and humiliate King Saul, whose pride had caused the problem to begin with. The people praised Jonathan, not Saul, as the man who had brought the great victory to Israel, and if the Lord had used Jonathan in such a wonderful way, why should he be executed?'*

- *While Jonathan was probably wondering why God wouldn't just expose the selfish and evil*

*ways of his father with the lots, God was going to do so by showing all the people and bringing the whole thing in the open...*

- I believe that Saul is livid here in anger, because he is trying to convenience those in Israel that it was not him but it was Jonhathan.
- This conversation between Saul and Jonathan shows us two things...
- ***The Interrogation. (V. 43)***
  - 'Then Saul said to Jonathan, "Tell me what you have done." And Jonathan told him, "I tasted a little honey with the tip of the staff that was in my hand. Here I am; I will die."
  - With force, Saul interrogates his son.
  - Jonathan's response to his father's forcefulness, is quite telling.
    - *Jonathan is ready to accept the punishment that his father has for him.*
  - Just to reiterate, Saul did go against his dad's curse, but he did so unknowingly.
    - Some scholars think that Jonathan's response shows sarcasm that his dad would have him killed for this, others think he accepted the punishment 100%.
      - *Either way, the fact remains that Saul interrogated him, and in verse 44, we see Saul's intentions...*

- *While Jonathan ‘may’ have attempted to make this a joking matter, Saul, by no means was treating this as a joke.*
- **The Intentions. (V. 44)**
  - ‘And Saul said, “God do so to me and more also; you shall surely die, Jonathan.”
  - *When saul says ‘God do so to me and more also;’ means that if Saul does not kill Jonathan for breaking the oath, He’s asking God to kill him if he doesn’t kill Jonathan.*
    - *Yet again, Saul is excusing his own behavior of the past, and focusing it on Jonathan.*
  - He doesn’t mention God punishing him for what he’s done in the past, just what he wants God to do if he doesn’t kill Jonathan.
    - *What a warped mind and way of thinking.*
  - *Now, there is something very important about the oath that Saul made back in 1st Samuel 14:24-35:*
    - Saul (obviously), was Israel’s King.
    - Because of this, Saul as King had the power to curse.
    - *But, unlike the Lord, Saul did not have the power to enforce the curse.*
      - *Scholar Robert D. Bergen said ‘The curse of a king, like every other royal utterance, was*

*ultimately the word of a human being and thus mired in the frailties of the human condition.’*

- So men could do nothing to change God’s curses, they could change the curse that mankind came up with.
  - *Saul’s downward spiral continues, and his relationship with his son continues to greatly deteriorate.*

**Point 5: The Loyalty Shown. (V. 45)**

- ‘Then the people said to Saul, “Shall Jonathan die, who has worked this great salvation in Israel? Far from it! As the LORD lives, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground, for he has worked with God this day.” So the people ransomed Jonathan, so that he did not die.’
- *Don’t forget the powerful words of Jonathan himself back in 1st Samuel 14:6...*
  - ‘Jonathan said to the young man who carried his armor, “Come, let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised. It may be that the LORD will work for us, for nothing can hinder the LORD from saving by many or by few.”
  - Jonathan’s faith had been seen before, as it was being seen now...
- *When I think of these circumstances, I can’t help but think of Exodus 14:14...*

- ***'The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.'***
- Jonathan didn't outrage about the result of the lots (like I know I probably would have), he simply let the Lord fight on his behalf.
  - ***The Lord uses the people of Israel to expose Saul and to redeem Jonathan.***
    - ***What's interesting here is that by saying 'As the Lord lives', they are using the same oath that Saul did.***
  - ***The people value Jonathan's genuine faith over Saul's rash and destructive vow...***

**Conclusion:**

- No matter the context, as long as I've heard the phrase 'Sin in the Camp!', it's always been used in reference to someone else.
  - ***Their sin and actions, and not the sin and actions of the one saying it.***
- ***When you think and look back on this sermon in the days and weeks to come, when you hear the phrase 'Sin in the Camp!'***
  - ***I want you to immediately look at yourself.***
    - See what sin you may have done to separate you from God, and do whatever is necessary to repent and ask the Lord to forgive you.
- ***For years, most of us in this room tonight have acted like Saul for way too long...***

- ***We've been the cause of sin in the camp but we've wasted so much time and energy trying to get others to believe that it's not us. It's someone else.***
  - Remember sin will blind you, and God will make a way for the truth to come out. He did that tonight by showing the loyalty of the men to side with Jonathan...
- Is their sin in the camp of your life that you need to deal with tonight?
  - ***Point 1: The Lord is Silent. (V. 36-37)***
  - ***Point 2: The Leaders are Summoned. (V. 38-39)***
  - ***Point 3: The Lots are Started. (V. 40-42)***
  - ***Point 4: The Livid Saul. (V. 43-44)***
  - ***Point 5: The Loyalty Shown. (V. 45)***