



Honing in on the Heart!’ Sermon Series

Sermon #22:

‘Taking Matters into Your Own Hands!’

Wednesday, August 7th, 2024

Last week in ‘Honing in on the Heart:

- It’s been two weeks since we have found ourselves in 1st Samuel during Midweek Worship.
 - Pastor Steve did a great job last week as he wrapped up his mini-series in Jonah.
- ***The last time we were in 1st Samuel...***
 - I preached a sermon entitled ***‘Last Words of an Exceptional Leader!’*** as we looked at 1st Samuel 12:6-25.
 - I asked the question: ***What last words does Samuel leave with Israel?***
 - **Point 1: *The History Lesson. (V. 6-12)***
 - **Point 2: *The Habits Listed. (V. 13-18)***
 - **Point 3: *The Holy Lord. (V. 19-25)***

- Based on this message from several weeks ago how have you applied the history lesson, habits and holiness of the Lord to your own personal life?

‘Taking Matters into Your Own Hands!’

1st Samuel 13:1-23

Sermon in a Sentence:

In 1st Samuel 13 we see that Saul begins to take Matters into his own hands with a puffed up ego, a pushy exchange, and persistent military engagements.

Intro:

- Taking Matters into our own hands is something that we tend to do when we feel that no one else can accomplish a certain task but us.
 - ***Tonight as we get into 1st Samuel 13, we are able to see a small glimpse of the downfall that will begin in Saul’s heart, gradually over time.***
 - 1st Samuel chapters 13-15, focus on Saul’s early time as King.
- ***Over the course of these chapters in the next few weeks, we will see that Saul is going to make some foolish decisions, but he won’t own up to them.***
 - He will cover his tracks with lies and shift blame.
 - ***For the rest of 1st Samuel, we will have a front row seat as to how Saul literally self-destructed.***

- Tonight we get to see the first step in Saul's self destructing journey.
 - *If you and I are not careful, we can fall into the same boat.*
- Tonight we are going to see how Saul took matters into his own hands, and left God out of the equation.
 - *This is a dangerous thing when we think that we can do it all and that we don't need God.*
- Just as Saul got into this situation and his heart condition became focused on self, we can fall into the same trap.
 - *In tonight's text, it is my prayer that we see what occurred in Saul's life and hopefully learn how we can avoid falling into the same pitfalls.*

Read 1st Samuel 13:1-23

Question to Ask:

How does Saul show us the devastation that can come with taking matters into our own hands?

Point 1: Puffed Up Ego. (V. 1-7)

- We were told earlier in the book of 1st Samuel (in 1st Samuel 8:20), that the entire reason the people wanted a King was so that he could fight their military battles for them.
 - *In these verses, this is what happens. Saul gets to do what they wanted him to do, but pride*

walks into his heart and seems to never leave Saul.

- Before we get into the military actions that happen in verses 2-7, we need to look at verse 1, as it can cause us to have some questions...
 - 'Saul lived for one year and then became king, and when he had reigned for two years over Israel,'
 - *Depending on what translation you have, this verse is weird and reads very funny.*
 - *When it comes to translation, this is one of the boldest and most courageous translations that those who translated the original manuscripts made.*
 - *Most scholars agree that something happened to the Hebrew Text of 1st Samuel 13:1, meaning it was lost somewhere in the transmission of the text.*
 - Because of this, we can only estimate how long Saul's reign was in Israel.
 - The reason we have the translation we do today, is because those who translated the King James Bible in 1611, did their best to make due with a bad situation.
 - *We need to know that in ancient times it was not irregular to have dates omitted.*
 - *The scholars who translated the NIV Bible, estimate that Saul was around 30 years old*

*when he became king, and in connecting with what Paul says in **Acts 13:21**, they estimate that the length of Saul's reign as king was 42 years.*

- 'Then they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years.'
Acts 13:21
- Either way, what is clear is that Saul's true character begins to be revealed, and the fact that he had a puffed up ego is evident.
 - I believe there are **3** things we need to point out concerning Saul's Puffed Up Ego.
- ***Lingering Problem. (V. 2)***
 - 'Saul chose three thousand men of Israel. Two thousand were with Saul in Michmash and the hill country of Bethel, and a thousand were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin. The rest of the people he sent home, every man to his tent.'
 - ***The Philistines were still a problem to Israel at this time, so in order to combat this problem, one of Saul's first acts as King, is to put an army in place.***
 - We were told back in 1st Samuel 11:8 that 300,000 men volunteered but Saul only enlisted 3,000.
 - ***To try and do away with this lingering problem, Saul put 2,000 troops under his command at***

Micmash, which was 4.5 Miles northeast of the capital city (at that time) of Gibeah.

- Jonathan had 1,000 troops in the capital city.
 - ***Jonathan is going to play a big role in the remaining narrative of 1st Samuel, but this is the first mention of him. He is Saul's son.***
- Robert D. Bergen mentions an interesting perspective as to WHY Saul had put the troops strategically where he did:
 - ***'The apparent objective of the troop deployments described here was the removal of a Philistine administrative center at Geba in the Israelite heartland; the presence of this enemy outpost less than three miles from Israel's original capital would have constituted a severe threat to the early Israelite monarchy.'***
 - Also, Geba or Gibeah, was a city that was set aside for the Aaronic priesthood (according to Joshua 21:7), and to have this city back in their grasp would allow them to strengthen the worship of the Lord.

- The lingering problem causes an army to be assembled, which is going to lead to lies that will be proclaimed across the land.
- **Lie's Proclaimed. (V. 3-4)**
 - 'Jonathan defeated the garrison of the Philistines that was at Geba, and the Philistines heard of it. And Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, "Let the Hebrews hear." 4 And all Israel heard it said that Saul had defeated the garrison of the Philistines, and also that Israel had become a stench to the Philistines. And the people were called out to join Saul at Gilgal.'
 - **Please notice carefully here, that Jonathan was the one who defeated the garrison of the philistines at Geba. Not Saul.**
 - But Saul made sure that he was given credit for the victory and not his son.
 - **This is a small issue that is foreshadowing a greater issue in Saul's heart and character, that will be revealed throughout 1st Samuel.**
 - ***Word Study***
 - We need to turn our attention to the word garrison that we find here in verse 3.
 - It is likely that this is the same garrison that we find in 1st Samuel 10:5.
 - **The word garrison comes from the Hebrew word 'Netziv' נֶצִיב which can**

mean a military fort, or station, or a governor or political leader/official.

- **So when we look deeper into the meaning of this Hebrew word, it is possible that an assassination occurred, or it was just a small-scale skirmish against the military station.**
- Some will argue that Saul ordered Johnathan to take this military action.
 - **While that is certainly possible, I deem it as unlikely simply because Saul had not taken care of the lingering problems with the Philistines before now.**
- 1st Samuel 14:1 will also show us that Jonathan is completely capable and independent to be able to achieve such a military victory.
 - **I believe Saul is taking credit for something that he did not do, which is a lie that he had spread all throughout Israel.**
 - **Based on what unravels in the rest of the 1st Samuel narrative, this is a glimpse into the real character and nature of Saul.**
- John Woodhouse said **'Jonathan's action was heard as Saul's action. It**

seems that this is how Saul wanted the story told. After all, as we have seen, it was what he was supposed to do some time earlier.'

- This small military skirmish was going to wake up a sleeping giant that would cause literal panic in Israel.
- **Literal Panic. (V. 5-7)**
 - 'And the Philistines mustered to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots and six thousand horsemen and troops like the sand on the seashore in multitude. They came up and encamped in Michmash, to the east of Beth-aven. **6** When the men of Israel saw that they were in trouble (for the people were hard pressed), the people hid themselves in caves and in holes and in rocks and in tombs and in cisterns, **7** and some Hebrews crossed the fords of the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. Saul was still at Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling.'
 - **Israel had to know that there would be repercussions for their actions and that this military action would not come without consequences.**
 - While it's possible that Israel did anticipate some sort of comeback from the Philistines, they probably did not anticipate the size of this counter attack.

- **The Philistines had 10x as many chariots as Saul had men, and twice as many horseman and troops.**

■ **Because of the sheer strength of the Philistine army, we can see why they react the way that they do in verses 6-7.**

- We are told that once the people of Israel saw trouble on the horizon, they fall into a literal panic and start deserting the army.
 - **The scripture says that they hid in caves, holes, rocks, tombs (graves of the dead), and in other places.**
- The Hebrew people even crossed the river to get away, meaning they left the promised land entirely.
 - **Notice here that Saul did not join in on the dissertation, he remained at Gilgal just as Samuel had earlier told him to do.**
- Saul's Puffed Up Ego, had gotten the entire nation in big trouble, which leads us to a Pushy Exchange...

Point 2: Pushy Exchange. (V. 8-14)

- **Saul found himself with his back against the wall.**
 - The Philistines were threatening the Israelites and Saul undoubtedly faced some pressure.
- But, he remembered what Samuel had told him back in 1st Samuel 10:8.

- ‘Then go down before me to Gilgal. And behold, I am coming down to you to offer burnt offerings and to sacrifice peace offerings. Seven days you shall wait, until I come to you and show you what you shall do.’
- *Samuel was clear that Saul was to wait 7 days for him to arrive so that he could offer Sacrifices to prepare Israel’s army to go out.*
 - *The reason for this was so that Israel’s army could have the blessings of the Lord on them as they went out to fight.*
- There are 3 things to point out regarding the Pushy Exchange that we find in these verses.
- *Impatience. (V. 8-9)*
 - ‘He waited seven days, the time appointed by Samuel. But Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and the people were scattering from him. So Saul said, “Bring the burnt offering here to me, and the peace offerings.” And he offered the burnt offering.’
 - *Saul took the direction that was given to him seriously, but he allowed himself to grow impatient.*
 - While Saul was placed by God as Israel’s king, the importance of sacrifices before the battle was to show God’s role in the battle that would be fought. Acknowledging His power and hand in the fight was important.
- *Before we over critique Saul and his impatience, we need to look at what he was dealing with.*
 - Time would have been so precious to Saul in this situation.
 - Each day the Philistines would have been creeping closer and they would have made everyone quite uncomfortable.
 - *But, Saul did wait the 7 days.*
- *It was good that Saul waited 7 days for Samuel to arrive, but the key to understanding this is that Saul was guilty of partial obedience, which is still disobedience.*
 - *It’s not okay to just obey part of God’s commands and Words, and then grow impatient on what we do not like.*
- Saul is most likely facing pressure from the people, they want to try and get troops together to defend their land and their families.
 - *When our backs are against the wall is usually when we need God the most, but we often look to ourselves in impatience and panic.*
- *Saul does that here, his army is scattering and dwindling by the day, and he offers the offerings.*
 - W.W. said ‘*Saul didn’t want to go into the battle without first offering a*

sacrifice to the Lord, which in itself may have been a subtle form of superstition, like carrying the ark into the battle. Later Samuel would remind Saul that God seeks obedience and not sacrifice.'

- ***When we get impatient with God and what He's doing or not doing in our lives, we take matters into our own hands, which is a very dangerous thing to do.***

- Numbers 18:7 was also clear that a priest was the only one that could offer sacrifices under the Old Covenant.
 - 'And you and your sons with you shall guard your priesthood for all that concerns the altar and that is within the veil; and you shall serve. I give your priesthood as a gift,^[a] and any outsider who comes near shall be put to death.' Numbers 18:7
- Saul knew that he did wrong though, based on what he says when Samuel arrives...
- ***Inevitable Excuses. (V. 10-12)***
 - 'As soon as he had finished offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came. And Saul went out to meet him and greet him. 11 Samuel said, "What have you done?" And Saul said, "When I saw that the people were scattering from me,

and that you did not come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines had mustered at Michmash, 12 I said, 'Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the favor of the LORD.' So I forced myself, and offered the burnt offering."

- Just as Saul took the matter into his own hands, look who shows up, Samuel.
 - ***Samuel immediately confronts Saul, and then the excuses start to roll off of Saul's tongue.***
 - ***When you and I are wrong against God, and we are caught in sin, excuses will immediately come out of our lips which further reveal that we were wrong in the first place, and we know it.***
- The excuses that Saul comes up with are this:
 - ***#1: The Army was deserting him.***
 - ***#2: Samuel, you were late.***
 - ***#3: The Philistines will come down and destroy me and I won't have the Lord on my side because no offering had been sacrificed.***
- ***Several things about Saul's excuse relate to us.***
 - ***When we are caught in sin and maybe even embarrassed by our sin, how often do we shift the blame on someone else.***

- Saul says he disobeyed because the people left him and because Samuel was late.

○ **The next time you sin and God convicts you, pay careful attention to who you blame.**

- **This is why some reason will leave a Church for a particular reason. They know they've done wrong and they feel guilty.**

- Instead of asking God to forgive them and moving on with fellow believers they would rather blame their fellow believers, their Pastor, staff, leadership, etc. because they don't want to face God with the consequences of what they've done.

○ **If your first thought when you are confronted with sin is to blame others, you need to look inside at yourself.**

- **There comes a time in each person's life where it's not everyone else that is always the problem, sometimes it is you.**

● **In verse 12, Saul says that he 'forced' himself to offer the burnt offering.**

○ ***Word Study***

- This word 'forced' in the English comes from the Hebrew word **'Afaq'** אָפַק

which is only found 7 times in the OT and literally means compelled or forced, is interesting here.

- **Within the context of the situation going on, Saul feels that he has no choice but to disobey Samuel (hence disobeying God), because of the threat of the Philistines.**

○ **In Saul's situation and in our situation, we ALWAYS have a choice on whether or not we are going to obey God.**

- No matter what the enemies look like that are on your battlefield, we never have an excuse for sinning and willfully sinning against God.

○ Now, Samuel will respond to the excuses that Saul has given.

● **Insubordination caused dire Consequences. (V. 13-14)**

○ 'And Samuel said to Saul, "You have done foolishly. You have not kept the command of the LORD your God, with which he commanded you. For then the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. 14 But now your kingdom shall not continue. The LORD has sought out a man after his own heart, and the LORD has commanded him to be prince[b] over his people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you."

- ***Saul's disobedience in the face of danger comes with severe consequences due to the fact that Saul shows that he thinks he is over Samuel.***

- ***Saul's line would not continue as the King of Israel because the Kingdom of Israel was under God's authority (1st Samuel 12:20-25).***
- Saul fails to acknowledge and that the prophet's role was higher than his as the divine messenger to God's people.
 - ***Saul disobeyed God because he refused to trust God that God could deliver him and his people.***
- One scholar said this of Saul's actions ***'a failure to submit to Yahweh's word through is prophet.'***
 - ***While I am not a priest and we are not under the Old Covenant, I do feel that it's important to respect and revere the spiritual leaders that God puts before us.***

- ***I was brought up in a Church culture where the man of God was respected.***

- I was brought up in a time where you didn't bad mouth the Pastor if he didn't visit you, you didn't dare call him by his first name, and you didn't go around spreading lies about him. Simply

because God had called Him and God will deal with His messengers.

- ***We live in a present culture that has even crept into our Church, where people no longer honor and respect the Pastor.***
 - They'd rather have fried Pastor for lunch, then to respect him.
- I understand that some Pastors are not worthy of respect but it's not your job to run them off, you let God deal with His undershepherds.
 - ***Because when Saul undermined Samuel, he showed the whole nation of Israel that it was okay to do so.***
 - Older folks, watch the example you set for the younger folks in our Church.
- 'Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.' 1st Timothy 5:17
 - ***I'm not a great Pastor, preacher, leader, teacher, and I don't think I'm worthy of double honor.***
- ***But I do think for the sake of future generations and how they view the pulpit and the office of Pastor, that we must listen to our spiritual leaders and respect them even if we don't always agree.***

- Insubordination of God’s leaders will cause consequences in our lives.
- Tonight we’ve been able to see a puffed up ego, a pushy exchange by Saul, and now the writer of Samuel gives us a general overview of information.

Point 3: *Persistent Engagements. (V. 15-23)*

- *Verses 15-23 are a collection of general information about what continued to happen based on the initial decision earlier in our text to attack the Philistine garrison in the first place.*
 - These verses will prove to be helpful for understanding the context of what occurs when we study 1st Samuel 14 next Wednesday.
- ‘And Samuel arose and went up from Gilgal. The rest of the people went up after Saul to meet the army; they went up from Gilgal[c] to Gibeah of Benjamin. And Saul numbered the people who were present with him, about six hundred men. **16** And Saul and Jonathan his son and the people who were present with them stayed in Geba of Benjamin, but the Philistines encamped in Michmash. **17** And raiders came out of the camp of the Philistines in three companies. One company turned toward Ophrah, to the land of Shual; **18** another company turned toward Beth-horon; and another company turned toward the border that looks down on the Valley of Zeboim toward the wilderness. **19** Now there was no blacksmith to be found throughout all the land of Israel, for the Philistines said, “Lest the Hebrews make themselves swords or spears.” **20** But

every one of the Israelites went down to the Philistines to sharpen his plowshare, his mattock, his axe, or his sickle,[d] **21** and the charge was two-thirds of a shekel[e] for the plowshares and for the mattocks, and a third of a shekel[f] for sharpening the axes and for setting the goads.[g] **22** So on the day of the battle there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people with Saul and Jonathan, but Saul and Jonathan his son had them. **23** And the garrison of the Philistines went out to the pass of Michmash.’

- **Only 600 men stayed with Saul to fight the philistines.**
 - From 300,000, to 3,000 and now to only 600 who were willingly to stick it out and fight.
- ***The Philistines sent raiding parties all across Israel, and it was obvious that Saul and his 600 soldiers were not able to do anything about it.***
 - To make matters worse, we are told beginning in verse 19, that the Israelites had no blacksmith that would make weapons for them and they were dependent on the Philistines to sharpen and keep up their farming equipments.
- ***We are told that Saul and Jonathan have metal weapons (go figure) but the rest of Israel had weapons made of wood or stone, arrows, slings, and clubs, that would not have been as effective.***
 - Especially against the raiding parties of the Philistines.
- ***While the situation seemed quite hopeless, it was as a result of Saul wanting to take matters into his own***

hands instead of trusting God with an impossible situation.

- Next week, we will find that the tide will change when we get into 1st Samuel 14, but until we get there, we are left to ponder the hopeless situation of the Israelites.

Conclusion:

- When we cover large narrative portions of scripture like we did tonight, we will hit all kinds of topics and subjects, simply because that is what expository preaching is.
 - ***The important thing tonight is that you see the danger that we invite into our lives when we take matters into our own hands instead of trusting God.***
- If you are wondering if you are guilty tonight of taking a certain situation into your own hands, then check your heart to see if you have a:
 - **Point 1: *Puffed Up Ego. (V. 1-7)***
 - **Point 2: *Pushy Exchange. (V. 8-14)***
 - **Point 3: *Persistent Engagements. (V. 15-23)***
- While Saul faced the Philistines in battle and them coming so close to his people, he made the decision to disobey God.
 - ***I do not know who the philistines are in your life.***
- ***No matter who, or what they are, you will not do well to take the situation in your own hands.***
 - Instead, Trust God.
- Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.
- You respond how He leads you to tonight.