

1 Samuel 13:1-22
August 28, 2022

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: What does it mean to “wait patiently upon the Lord?” What does that even entail? Better yet, what do you think drives impatience? [Let people engage]

Transition: I’m going to guess that 100% of us have at some time or other been impatient in hearing from the Lord and have pre-empted the Lord’s timing because we couldn’t wait any longer! I’m also going to make the educated guess that it didn’t go well! We are now back in our study in 1 Samuel, and we are going to see an example of Saul’s impatience. But to appreciate this, let me get you re-acquainted with the storyline.

Back in 1 Sam Chp 10, Samuel had anointed Saul as Israel’s new king, and he specifically instructed Saul, “Go down ahead of me to Gilgal. I will surely come down to you to sacrifice burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, but you must wait seven days until I come to you and tell you what you are to do.” Saul realized that Israel was in dire straits. The Philistines controlled most of the open country with local garrisons such as the one at Geba, and they appear to have been able to move freely throughout the land. This was unnerving to Saul as he was waiting for Samuel to come to perform the ritual ceremonies by which soldiers were consecrated for battle. Let’s see what happens! Would someone volunteer to read 1 Sam 13?

BOOK:

Samuel Rebukes Saul

13 Saul was thirty years old when he became king, and he reigned over Israel forty-two years.

² Saul (when he had reigned over Israel for two years) chose three thousand men from Israel; two thousand were with him at Micmash and in the hill country of Bethel, and a thousand were with Jonathan at Gibeah in Benjamin. The rest of the men he sent back to their homes.

³ Jonathan attacked the Philistine outpost at Geba, and the Philistines heard about it. Then Saul had the trumpet blown throughout the land and said, “Let the Hebrews hear!” ⁴ So all Israel heard the news: “Saul has attacked the Philistine outpost, and now Israel has become a stench to the Philistines.” And the people were summoned to join Saul at Gilgal.

⁵ The Philistines assembled to fight Israel, with three thousand (Hebrew 30,000) chariots, six thousand charioteers, and soldiers as numerous as the sand on the seashore. They went up and camped at Micmash, east of Beth Aven. ⁶ When the men of Israel saw that their situation was critical and that their army was hard pressed, they hid in caves and thickets, among the rocks, and in pits and cisterns. ⁷ Some Hebrews even crossed the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead.

Saul remained at Gilgal, and all the troops with him were quaking with fear. ⁸ He waited seven days, the time set by Samuel; but Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and Saul’s men began to scatter. ⁹ So he said, “Bring me the burnt offering and the fellowship offerings (traditionally peace offerings)” And Saul offered up the burnt offering. ¹⁰ Just as he finished making the offering, Samuel arrived, and Saul went out to greet him.

¹¹ “What have you done?” asked Samuel.

Saul replied, “When I saw that the men were scattering, and that you did not come at the set time, and that the Philistines were assembling at Micmash, ¹² I thought, ‘Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the LORD’s favor.’ So I felt compelled to offer the burnt offering.”

¹³ “You acted foolishly,” Samuel said. “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. ¹⁴ But now your kingdom will not endure; the LORD has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him leader of his people, because you have not kept the LORD’s command.”

¹⁵ Then Samuel left Gilgal (went his way) and went up to Gibeah in Benjamin, and Saul counted the men who were with him. They numbered about six hundred.

Israel Without Weapons

¹⁶ Saul and his son Jonathan and the men with them were staying in Gibeah in Benjamin, while the Philistines camped at Micmash. ¹⁷ Raiding parties went out from the Philistine camp in three detachments. One turned toward Ophrah in the vicinity of Shual, ¹⁸ another toward Beth Horon, and the third toward the borderland overlooking the Valley of Zeboim facing the desert.

¹⁹ Not a blacksmith could be found in the whole land of Israel, because the Philistines had said, “Otherwise the Hebrews will make swords or spears!” ²⁰ So all Israel went down to the Philistines to have their plowshares, mattocks, axes and sickles (plowshares) sharpened. ²¹ The price was two thirds of a shekel (1/4 oz) for sharpening plowshares and mattocks, and a third of a shekel (1/8 oz) for sharpening forks and axes and for repointing goads.

²² So on the day of the battle not a soldier with Saul and Jonathan had a sword or spear in his hand; only Saul and his son Jonathan had them.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q: What did you most like about this passage? What resonated with you? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you least like about this passage? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you find in this passage that you didn’t understand? [Let people engage]

Q: What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? [Let people engage]

LOOK:

When it appears that the Lord is not hearing our prayers, sit with trust in Him. He has the macro view of our lives in mind, so He will respond in His perfect way and in His perfect time. It will be worth the wait!

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament (1 Sam 13-15)*. Victor Books.

III. The Rejection of the King (13–15)

These three chapters record three sins of King Saul, sins that ultimately cost him the kingdom.

A. Impatience (chap. 13).

The time had now come for Israel to gather at Gilgal as Samuel and Saul had agreed months before (10:8). Note how Saul took the credit for his son's victory at Gibeah in order to impress the people and get them to follow him. The vast host of the Philistines began to assemble, and the longer Saul waited, the more dangerous his position became. If he were to strike immediately, he could defeat the enemy, but his delay only gave them opportunity to become stronger. Saul's impatience (and unbelief) led him to go ahead without Samuel, and while Saul was completing the offering, the prophet appeared. Verses 11–12 record Saul's excuses as he tried to put the blame on Samuel and the people. "I forced myself!" he told Samuel, but the prophet knew the truth. This was the beginning of the end: if God could not trust him in this little matter, how could He trust him with the kingdom? Saul's impatience cost him the kingdom.

Merrill, E. H. (1985). *1 Samuel*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 443-446) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books

4. SAUL'S FIRST REBUKE (chap.13)

13:1. If the setting of the reaffirmation of Saul's kingship and Samuel's address on that occasion is the first anniversary of his coronation, it may be that the events of this chapter occurred after his second anniversary. This is a possible interpretation of the textually difficult passage translated by the NIV as **Saul was 30 years old when he became king, and he reigned over Israel 42 years**. The Hebrew is literally, "Saul was years old when he began to reign and he reigned two years over Israel." Obviously, a figure has dropped out of the first part of the statement, and the second part cannot mean that he reigned for a total of only two years. Old Testament chronology implies—and Paul in his address at Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:21) distinctly teaches—that Saul reigned for 40 years, no doubt a round number but close to the actual figure. There is no reason to think that the number "two" is suspect, however, for all manuscripts and versions retain it. It is only the desire to see 1 Samuel 13:1 as a regular formula for kingship (as in 2 Sam. 2:10; 5:4; 1 Kings 14:21; 22:42; etc.) that leads many scholars to postulate that "40" or some other figure is missing. In the context, however, the historian is not introducing a kingship formula (why do so here, well into Saul's reign?), but is probably indicating that the Ammonite threat had come in Saul's first year and now, in his second, the Philistines must be encountered.

A problem remains with the first part of the Hebrew statement, "Saul was years old..." Many scholars, following Origen (circa A.D. 185–254), postulate "30" (so NIV). Since Jonathan, Saul's son, was already grown then and served as a military commander, Saul would have been

older than 30. It is more likely that the figure to be supplied is “40” though this too is difficult to reconcile with the description (1 Sam. 9:2) that Saul was, at the time of his anointing, “an impressive young man.” Of course, “young” in this latter passage may not be a good translation for the Hebrew *bāhûr*, a word that could be rendered “choice.”

The best translation of 13:1 would seem to be, “Saul was [40] years old when he began to reign, and he reigned over Israel for two years.” This is further supported by the next verse which begins with a verb in the preterite tense, a construction indicating a close connection with the previous clause. “Saul chose ...” (v. 2) implies that after he had reigned for two years Saul began to select and train a regular army, not the larger militia he had used previously.

13:2–15. Having learned from his recent experience with the Ammonites, **Saul** set about to create a standing army of **3,000** trained troops—2,000 under his direct control and **1,000** under his son **Jonathan**. These he stationed at **Micmash** and **Gibeah** respectively, in order to avert Philistine attacks. After a preliminary encounter **at Geba**, halfway between Micmash and Gibeah, **the Philistines** (with **3,000 chariots**, **6,000 charioteers** and innumerable foot **soldiers**) pushed the Israelite troops eastward all the way to **Gilgal** (vv. 3–7). This is the first of Israel’s three major battles with the Philistines in Saul’s reign (cf. 17:1–54; 31:1–6). (Though the Heb. reads “30,000 chariots,” this is problematic because this would mean 5 chariots for every charioteer. The Heb. words for “30,000” and for “3,000” look almost alike. The one could easily be mistaken for the other when the text was being copied. Perhaps this suggests that the text of 1 Sam. has suffered a bit in transmission.)

There **Saul** waited for **Samuel** to come and offer sacrifice (13:8) as he had been told to do two years earlier (10:8; see comments on 13:1–2). But on the seventh day, the day **Samuel** was to arrive, **Saul** could wait no longer and unlawfully took on himself the priestly task of **offering** community sacrifice. Then **Samuel** came and when he knew that **Saul** had taken liberties by offering the sacrifice, he rebuked him with the words, **You acted foolishly**. Because of this deed, Samuel said, Saul’s dynasty would come to an end (**Your kingdom will not endure**), and that of another man would take its place, **a man after God’s own heart**. The severity of God’s judgment on Saul must be seen in the light of God’s holiness. As in the instance of the people’s careless handling of the ark at Beth Shemesh, so Saul had now violated the holy standards of the Lord by disobeying the Law of Moses (Lev. 6:8–13) and the word of His Prophet Samuel (1 Sam. 10:8). That there was the possibility of the eternal duration of Saul’s dynasty is clear from 1 Samuel 13:13, but this in no way teaches that the rise of David’s dynasty was contingent on the fall of Saul’s. All Samuel said was that Saul’s kingship would end and someone else’s would begin.

13:16–18. Having taken **Geba** from the Philistines (v. 3), **Saul and ... Jonathan**, after the incident with Samuel at Gilgal, were once again attacked by **the Philistines** from **Micmash**. The latter divided themselves into **three** companies of **raiding parties**, one of which **turned** north of Micmash **toward Ophrah**, the second southwest **toward Beth Horon**, and the **third** east **toward ... Zeboim** (the Jordan Valley). The rest of the overconfident Philistine army remained at Micmash.

13:19–23. This parenthetical note explains that the Israelites were at a big disadvantage because they were not skilled in the manufacture and use of iron; **the Philistines** had kept them from metallurgy for fear the Israelites would **make swords** and **spears**. **The Philistines** had apparently learned sophisticated metallurgy from the Hittites or other Anatolian peoples with whom they had come in contact as part of the Sea People’s migration from the Aegean Sea area to Canaan around 1200 B.C. Israel had to depend on the Philistines for iron weapons and tools (v.

20). In wartime such services were not available, so **only Saul and ... Jonathan had iron weapons** (v. 22).

Mathews, K. A. (1998). *The Historical Books*. In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), *Holman Concise Bible Commentary* (pp. 112–114). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

Saul's Foolishness (13:1–14:52). Saul's son, Jonathan, bravely initiated a war with the Philistines. However, the troops of Israel feared the numerous Philistines gathered at Micmash.

Saul awaited Samuel for seven days at Gilgal to offer a sacrifice to entreat the Lord's blessing. When Samuel did not come at the appointed time (see 10:8), Saul's army began to defect. Saul acted foolishly because of impatience. Out of desperation, he disobeyed the prophet Samuel's instructions and offered burnt offerings. Samuel arrived and rebuked Saul for his disobedience. Because he acted foolishly, Samuel prophesied that Saul would lose his kingdom. God would choose "a man after his own heart." Samuel's rebuke of Saul set the pattern for future relations between the leaders of God's people—prophets and kings. The future history of Israel and Judah illustrates that their kings disobeyed God's prophets to their own peril.

Philbeck, B. F. (1972). *1 Samuel*. In H. F. Paschall & H. H. Hobbs (Eds.), *The Teacher's Bible Commentary* (p. 170). Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers.

Saul Rebels Against Philistines (1 Sam. 13:1–25)

The passage—From the very beginning of Saul's reign, he faced two major conflicts: one against his Philistine overlords, and the other against Samuel, the man of God. The first would eventually cost Saul his life, the latter would contribute even sooner to the loss of his mental stability. The details of these two struggles are no longer precisely known, but their broad outlines can be discerned without difficulty.

Israel was in dire straits when Saul took office. The Philistines controlled most of the open country with local garrisons such as the one at Geba, and they appear to have been able to move freely throughout the land. Even more important was the Philistines' complete arms embargo on Israel. Iron was just coming into use in the eastern Mediterranean world, and the Philistines exploited their advantage over Israel by keeping the techniques of blacksmithing secret (13:19 f.). Saul, therefore, was forced to rely on small, poorly equipped forces who carried on a guerilla-type warfare (vv. 2, 22).

In an effort to free Israel from foreign domination, Jonathan and a small band of followers attacked and defeated the garrison at Geba. As the Philistines raised an enormous army to quell the uprising, Jonathan dispersed his troops in the rugged terrain nearby (vv. 6–7).

In the meantime, Saul was mustering another force at Gilgal. The morale of these troops was low, however, and desertions mounted steadily. Saul's situation was complicated by the fact that he was waiting for Samuel to come to perform the ritual ceremonies by which soldiers were consecrated for battle (Deut. 20:1–20; see 1 Sam. 21:4–5). After waiting for Samuel and the prescribed seven days (10:8), Saul offered the preparatory sacrifices himself. When Samuel finally arrived in camp, he indicated that Saul would be rejected as king for his presumptuous action.

Special points—Although other non-Levites are known to have offered sacrifice without incurring divine wrath (Judg. 6:25–26; 1 Kings 18:30 f.), apparently it was customary at this time

for Samuel to bless the sacrifice (1 Sam. 9:13). In any case, another explanation of God's rejection of Saul is given elsewhere (15:1–35).

The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). (1 Samuel 13:1-22). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

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