

1 Samuel 14

- Saul's days as king are numbered
 - The prophet declared that the king was no longer God's choice as king
 - Yet the Lord has not yet removed Saul
 - Nor has the Lord even removed His Spirit from Saul
 - But nevertheless, Saul's reign will come to an end
 - Meanwhile, Saul remains in power for a time to serve a couple of purposes
 - First, Saul's successor isn't ready to assume the throne yet
 - David is too young and inexperienced
 - God wants to season this young man, ironically using Saul as David's antagonist
 - Finally, the Lord wants to show the people of Israel the error of selecting a man with their flesh
 - So Saul gets a few decades to rule even after the Lord declares the end is coming
- Then as we ended last week early in chapter 14, we were introduced to Saul's son, Jonathan
 - Jonathan was leading part of Saul's small army...very small
 - In fact, Jonathan's army is so small it consists of only himself and his armor bearer
 - Jonathan has left Saul secretly to take the fight to the Philistines
 - We'll look at how Jonathan wins this battle tonight
 - Before that, let's remember why the Lord is elevating Saul's son to prominence
 - Normally, a king's son would be expected to follow the king into power

- But we know that the Lord will not permit Jonathan to assume the throne
- Yet the Lord will give him a measure of success for a time
- Jonathan becomes an instrument the Lord uses to bless the people of Israel despite their king
 - He will also become a means to ensuring the transfer of power from Saul to David comes with a measure of peace
 - We'll look at that transition later
- For now, the Lord uses Jonathan to bring about a military victory while exposing his father's growing impatience and rash behavior
 - Jonathan's decision to enter into battle by himself was an action taken in faith
 - He believed the Lord was willing to deliver a victory
 - He figured he needed to step out in faith to see what the Lord willed

[1Sam. 14:6](#) Then Jonathan said to the young man who was carrying his armor, "Come and let us cross over to the garrison of these uncircumcised; perhaps the Lord will work for us, for the Lord is not restrained to save by many or by few."

[1Sam. 14:7](#) His armor bearer said to him, "Do all that is in your heart; turn yourself, and here I am with you according to your desire."

[1Sam. 14:8](#) Then Jonathan said, "Behold, we will cross over to the men and reveal ourselves to them.

[1Sam. 14:9](#) "If they say to us, 'Wait until we come to you'; then we will stand in our place and not go up to them.

[1Sam. 14:10](#) "But if they say, 'Come up to us,' then we will go up, for the Lord has given them into our hands; and this shall be the sign to us."

- Jonathan was operating in faith, but it's not blind faith
 - It's faith based in a knowledge of the Lord and his word
 - Jonathan knew that the Lord had declared that the Philistines were under divine judgment
 - He knew that in the past the Lord had delivered great victories to Israel with small armies

- He knew the Lord was willing to give signs to His warriors who sought His direction
- And he knew that one must act in faith if he hoped to see the Lord's response
- So Jonathan took a calculated step of faith
 - When we talk about acting in faith, this is what we mean
 - It's not a gamble or wishful thinking
 - I can't play the lottery and expect a windfall because I played with a hopeful expectation
 - Acting in faith means working with an understanding of God's promises, an awareness of His revealed will and a confidence in His ability to direct our steps
 - Jonathan possessed all these things
- When Jonathan announces his desire to attack, the armor bearer shows equal faith in agreeing to accompany Jonathan
 - He tells Jonathan to follow his heart, turn yourself, I am with you according to your desire
 - The better translation would be do what your heart is inclined to do and I am with you, my heart is as your heart
 - The armor bearer is also operating in faith
 - Jonathan may be acting in bold faith, but he doesn't repeat his father's mistake of acting impetuously without clear direction from the Lord
 - So Jonathan devises a test to learn the Lord's will
 - He will make his way into the canyon and will walk into the open to expose themselves to the men on the top of the hill
 - If the men at the top come down to engage with Jonathan, then he and the armor bearer will conclude the Lord is not giving them victory and will flee
 - If the enemy beckons Jonathan to come up to them, then Jonathan will conclude the Lord is granting them victory
 - This sign makes some sense militarily

- If you have the high ground and are confident in your strength and position, you would move down to engage the weaker enemy
- But if you are fearful, you would stay in place and wait for the enemy to come to you
- So Jonathan's sign determines whether the enemy feels confident or weak
- And a weak enemy was to be an indication that the Lord was preparing to defeat them

1Sam. 14:11 When both of them revealed themselves to the garrison of the Philistines, the Philistines said, "Behold, Hebrews are coming out of the holes where they have hidden themselves."

1Sam. 14:12 So the men of the garrison hailed Jonathan and his armor bearer and said, "Come up to us and we will tell you something." And Jonathan said to his armor bearer, "Come up after me, for the Lord has given them into the hands of Israel."

1Sam. 14:13 Then Jonathan climbed up on his hands and feet, with his armor bearer behind him; and they fell before Jonathan, and his armor bearer put some to death after him.

1Sam. 14:14 That first slaughter which Jonathan and his armor bearer made was about twenty men within about half a furrow in an acre of land.

1Sam. 14:15 And there was a trembling in the camp, in the field, and among all the people. Even the garrison and the raiders trembled, and the earth quaked so that it became a great trembling.

- So the Philistines see Jonathan appear from out of the canyon walls
 - They recognize the Hebrews are preparing to attack so they call Jonathan up saying they have something to tell him
 - This was merely an excuse to get Jonathan close so they could attack him
 - But Jonathan recognizes this means the Lord is granting victory
 - So he goes up by himself and when he reaches the top, he begins to kill the enemy in hand-to-hand combat
 - And his armor bearer follows and manages to kill more soldiers himself
 - Between the two of them they kill about 20 men in a small field

- This is an impressive victory for two men by itself
- But it's just the beginning
 - At that moment, the ground began to tremble
 - The earthquake unnerved the Philistines so that they would lose heart or interest in a battle
 - And instead, they would flee for their lives
 - Clearly the Lord is working to bring a victory for Jonathan
- And it's at about this time that men in Saul's army notice the commotion in the Philistine garrison
 - And the scene that follows is an example of the fog of war

1Sam. 14:16 Now Saul's watchmen in Gibeah of Benjamin looked, and behold, the multitude melted away; and they went here and there.

1Sam. 14:17 Saul said to the people who were with him, "Number now and see who has gone from us." And when they had numbered, behold, Jonathan and his armor bearer were not there.

1Sam. 14:18 Then Saul said to Ahijah, "Bring the ark of God here." For the ark of God was at that time with the sons of Israel.

1Sam. 14:19 While Saul talked to the priest, the commotion in the camp of the Philistines continued and increased; so Saul said to the priest, "Withdraw your hand."

1Sam. 14:20 Then Saul and all the people who were with him rallied and came to the battle; and behold, every man's sword was against his fellow, and there was very great confusion.

1Sam. 14:21 Now the Hebrews who were with the Philistines previously, who went up with them all around in the camp, even they also turned to be with the Israelites who were with Saul and Jonathan.

1Sam. 14:22 When all the men of Israel who had hidden themselves in the hill country of Ephraim heard that the Philistines had fled, even they also pursued them closely in the battle.

1Sam. 14:23 So the Lord delivered Israel that day, and the battle spread beyond Beth-aven.

- Saul has been killing time with his 600 body guards in Gilbeah, which is only about 1.5 miles away
 - His watchmen detect confusion in the Philistine camp

- Philistine warriors are in distress
- Many are fleeing the camp
- The ground is shaking
- When Saul learns, he recognizes he has a chance to seize the day
 - But Saul's approach to entering battle is very different than his sons
 - Saul's first step was to number his forces
 - He orders a count of all his men so he can decide whether he has enough to enter into battle
 - And in the course of the count he discovers that Jonathan and his armor bearer are gone
- By comparison, Jonathan wasn't worried about numbers at all, because he was going alone
 - He said that the Lord didn't care about numbers
 - He could bring victory with many or with few
- Secondly, Saul wants the Lord's favor in the fight, so he calls for the ark of the Lord to be brought out for battle
 - My English Bible says ark, but a number of manuscripts including the Septuagint indicate Saul called for the ephod not the ark
 - The ephod was an elaborate robe worn by the high priest
 - It held the Urim and the Thummim stones used to discern God's will
 - Saul calls for the priest and robe because he understands he must seek the Lord's will before entering into the fight
 - The priest could ascertain the will of God by throwing the stones
 - But notice in v.19 that Saul notices the commotion in the camp was growing stronger as the enemy melted away after the earthquake
 - Saul's dying to join the battle and win a victory while the opportunity presents itself
 - So he tells the priest "withdraw your hand"

- In other words, Saul tells the high priest to withdraw his hand from the pouch that contained the stones
- Saul doesn't need the priest to throw the stones after all
- He already knows what he wants to do...he's going into battle
- In fact, the sense of the wording is that Saul doesn't want to hear God's answer, lest the Lord refuse Saul his desire
 - Saul is determined to press forward while the victory seems certain
 - He's not willing to wait on the Lord
 - One commentator remarked that when Saul should have been acting he was waiting, and when he should have been waiting, he was acting
- By contrast, Jonathan followed his heart as his armor bearer said
 - Following the heart means remaining sensitive to the leading of the Spirit from moment to moment
 - The Lord was fully capable of speaking to Jonathan even without the stones
 - And Jonathan was confident he would hear from the Lord
 - So he acted in confidence that the Lord would direct His steps
 - The key difference is Jonathan wanted to do the Lord's will
 - While Saul wanted to do his own will
 - Saul is acting out of selfishness and self-centeredness
 - And this heart is going to get cause trouble for the people
- At this point Saul leads his men into the battle but they do nothing at all
 - Before Saul can act, the Lord causes the Philistines to turn on one another in confusion
 - Neither Jonathan nor Saul needs to fight the Philistines
 - They are fighting each other

- In fact, even those Jewish traitors that were within the Philistine camp saw the writing on the wall and turned sides
- This tells us that the confusion the Lord brought only impacted the Gentiles among the Philistines
- The Jews retained their senses
- Finally, the Jews in Ephraim hiding in caves over fear of the Philistines emerged when they realized the Philistine garrison was being routed
 - They began to pursue Philistines as well
 - So virtually everyone in the nation other than Saul and his men had a hand in the victory
 - Even the traitors could claim some measure of the victory
 - But Saul and his company did nothing except join the chase
 - His
- At this point, Saul's pride and ego are becoming enflamed and are threatening to impede sound judgment
 - Saul noticed that he was not leading the battle or even the chase that followed
 - So he contrived a plan to slow down the chase and extend the battle for a time
 - By hampering his own people from chasing and winning the battle too fast, Saul will give the enemy a chance to recover, regroup and setup a decisive battle
 - And in that decisive battle, Saul intends to lead the final charge where he can claim the credit for the victory
 - It's a cynical, selfish strategy that reveals this man's deteriorating heart
 - And Saul's prideful scheming has severe, unintended consequences

[1Sam. 14:24](#) Now the men of Israel were hard-pressed on that day, for Saul had put the people under oath, saying, "Cursed be the man who eats food before evening, and until I have avenged myself on my enemies." So none of the people tasted food.

[1Sam. 14:25](#) All the people of the land entered the forest, and there was honey on the ground.

[1Sam. 14:26](#) When the people entered the forest, behold, there was a flow of honey; but no man put his hand to his mouth, for the people feared the oath.

[1Sam. 14:27](#) But Jonathan had not heard when his father put the people under oath; therefore, he put out the end of the staff that was in his hand and dipped it in the honeycomb, and put his hand to his mouth, and his eyes brightened.

[1Sam. 14:28](#) Then one of the people said, "Your father strictly put the people under oath, saying, 'Cursed be the man who eats food today.'" And the people were weary.

[1Sam. 14:29](#) Then Jonathan said, "My father has troubled the land. See now, how my eyes have brightened because I tasted a little of this honey.

[1Sam. 14:30](#) "How much more, if only the people had eaten freely today of the spoil of their enemies which they found! For now the slaughter among the Philistines has not been great."

- Saul's men were hard-pressed we're told
 - The Hebrew word for hard-pressed is the same word we find in Exodus 3 to described the taskmaster Moses killed in self-defense
 - It describes someone who drives others harshly
 - Saul was driving his people under harsh condition
 - Saul had ordered his army to observe a fast until Saul himself has met the enemy in battle
 - There is old saying that an army moves on its stomach, because fighters need a lot of food to maintain their effectiveness
 - So it's clear to everyone that Saul's order is counterproductive to the effectiveness of the army...but no one can understand why he wants this
 - The people enter into the forest pursuing the enemy
 - There was honey available to feed the troops, food that would sustain them in battle right when they most needed it
 - But because of Saul's order, the men don't dare eat

- Eating would have meant death
- Jonathan didn't know about Saul's order, so he gladly ate of the honey and was strengthened for the chase
 - But others warned him telling that Saul said the one who eats would be cursed
 - A curse in scripture is a death sentence
 - There is no recovery from a curse; once God affirms a curse, the end is sure
- Jonathan says nothing about the curse that fell upon him, but he does comment on the foolishness of his father's edict
 - Jonathan remarks that the honey has been good for him and it would have been good for everyone
 - The people were faint with hunger which wasn't helping them fight
 - And as a result, they hadn't managed to kill many of the enemy today
 - And if the enemy survived, then they would live to fight another day
 - In this moment, the Lord uses Saul's sin to exact a revenge for his impetuosity
 - And as only God can, He also finds a just way to remove Saul's son from receiving the throne
 - Saul's own words bring a curse upon his son
 - And as a result of that curse, his son will die with him in battle, bringing an end to Saul's dynasty
- Saul's sin had even wider consequences among God's people
 - It led the people into sin

1Sam. 14:31 They struck among the Philistines that day from Michmash to Aijalon. And the people were very weary.

1Sam. 14:32 The people rushed greedily upon the spoil, and took sheep and oxen and calves, and slew them on the ground; and the people ate them with the blood.

[1Sam. 14:33](#) Then they told Saul, saying, “Behold, the people are sinning against the Lord by eating with the blood.” And he said, “You have acted treacherously; roll a great stone to me today.”

[1Sam. 14:34](#) Saul said, “Disperse yourselves among the people and say to them, ‘Each one of you bring me his ox or his sheep, and slaughter it here and eat; and do not sin against the Lord by eating with the blood.’” So all the people that night brought each one his ox with him and slaughtered it there.

[1Sam. 14:35](#) And Saul built an altar to the Lord; it was the first altar that he built to the Lord.

- The Israelites moved ahead with the fight despite their hunger and weakness
 - In one day’s time, they fight and pursue the enemy a distance of 15 miles in rough hill country
 - This would have been a difficult trek on a full stomach in peaceful circumstances
 - But they’re moving on empty stomachs under duress
 - But eventually, by God’s grace, the people win the battle
 - And as they come into the camp of the fleeing Philistines they are so hungry that they fall on the captured animals
 - They butcher the animals quickly and without following the rules in the Law requiring that the blood be drained first
 - The result is that the people have been driven into sin by Saul’s selfish and senseless restrictions
 - When the word is passed to Saul that the people are sinning in this manner, he intervenes
 - But once again, he intervenes in an entirely self-serving way
 - He commands the people to bring the animals to him
 - And then Saul would slaughter the animals for the people and distribute the meat to them personally
 - It’s obvious Saul is seeking to place himself in the center of the action again
 - The people will be giving him the animals so that he can return them

- It makes him appear to be a generous king handing out the meals
- To accomplish this task, Saul builds an altar on which to conduct the sacrifices
 - Throughout scripture we see godly men building altars to sacrifice to the Lord in thanks and worship
 - But Samuel wants us to understand that this is the first time that Saul has ever bothered to make such an altar
 - He's making one now because it's convenient to his selfish purpose
 - Not because he had a genuine desire to worship the Lord
 - Everything about this period of Saul's rule has revealed a man slipping further and further from worshipping and following the Lord
 - Instead, he's becoming accustomed to the role of king
 - And he seems determined to receive all the glory
 - Rather than using his position to lead Israel to worshipping the Lord
 - So that is the purpose of the king, just as it was the purpose of judges before
 - But Saul's rash behavior hasn't ended yet

1Sam. 14:36 Then Saul said, "Let us go down after the Philistines by night and take spoil among them until the morning light, and let us not leave a man of them." And they said, "Do whatever seems good to you." So the priest said, "Let us draw near to God here."

1Sam. 14:37 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 on that day.

1Sam. 14:38 Saul said, "Draw near here, all you chiefs of the people, and investigate and see how this sin has happened today.

- In v.36, Saul is ready to run down the hills and attack the Philistines by night to take the rest of the spoils
 - He seems drunk with the prospect of capturing more booty
 - His motives have shifted from existential concerns of preserving God's people to goals of personal gain

- It's becoming clear that the overriding force driving Saul is pride and selfishness
- Which is appropriate, since he was chosen according to the flesh and now he's acting according to the flesh
- Before he can begin to attack, the high priest, who has accompanied Saul in the battle suggests they consult the Lord before launching another attack
 - In v.37 he says "let's draw near to the Lord"
 - That phrase means let's worship the Lord for the purpose of seeking His favor in the battle
 - Don't you get the feeling that the priest was saying, "Saul, haven't you forgot something???"
 - At which point Saul reluctantly agrees to engage in a moment of worship
- Then Saul inquired of the Lord concerning this attack
 - But the Lord did not answer Saul
 - Now Saul is stuck
 - Having consulted the Lord for permission to attack and having received no reply, Saul can't order his troops to the fight
 - So he's mad
 - And Saul looks for an explanation for the Lord's silence, but he doesn't think to blame himself
 - Instead, Saul assumes that someone has violated his order to fast
 - And therefore, that person must be to blame for upsetting God
 - We must remember that Saul's order was not God's order, nor was it required by God's law
 - This was Saul's rule
 - In v.38 Saul demands an accounting from the people concerning the "sin" that caused the Lord's silence
 - This rule was issued from the king, so it would have been wrong to intentionally disobey it

- But it wasn't a sin against the Lord and His commands
- And it certainly wasn't sin to unknowingly violate the king's rule
- In fact, given that Saul's rule prevented Israel from defeating the Philistines, we could say that his rule was counter to the Lord's desire
- So Saul sets out to uncover the wrongdoer

[1Sam. 14:39](#) "For as the Lord lives, who delivers Israel, though it is in Jonathan my son, he shall surely die." But not one of all the people answered him.

[1Sam. 14:40](#) 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."

[1Sam. 14:41](#) Therefore, Saul said to the Lord, the God of Israel, "Give a perfect lot." And Jonathan and Saul were taken, but the people escaped.

[1Sam. 14:42](#) Saul said, "Cast lots between me and Jonathan my son." And Jonathan was taken.

[1Sam. 14:43](#) Then Saul said to Jonathan, "Tell me what you have done." So Jonathan told him and said, "I indeed tasted a little honey with the end of the staff that was in my hand. Here I am, I must die!"

[1Sam. 14:44](#) Saul said, "May God do this to me and more also, for you shall surely die, Jonathan."

[1Sam. 14:45](#) But the people said to Saul, "Must Jonathan die, who has brought about this great deliverance in Israel? Far from it! As the Lord lives, not one hair of his head shall fall to the ground, for he has worked with God this day." So the people rescued Jonathan and he did not die.

- Saul makes another rash declaration
 - He swears by the name of the Lord that whoever has violated this rule will die, even if it were his own son Jonathan
 - Saul doesn't realize it, but he's speaking prophetically to confirm Jonathan's eventual death
 - His foolish pride and selfishness ego have placed his son in this situation
 - Saul speaks in these broad and absolute terms cursing people and swearing on the name of the Lord
 - He binds himself to severe actions without considering the implications or even having all the facts

- We're seeing more and more of the dramatic character change taking place inside this man
 - If he was a humble and reasonable man in the beginning, he's now brash tyrant lacking self control
 - One of the most puzzling things about the story of Saul is his dramatic descent into madness
 - But notice this descent isn't a fall off a cliff
 - It's a series of steps driven by the flesh, fueled by pride and ungoverned by a desire to please the Lord
- Saul is the Bible's most dramatic character study in a man of God gone wrong
 - He began with a tender heart and the Spirit of God
 - But he favored living in his flesh and chose to seek for his own desires
 - The Bible warns us that when we take that turn, it has the power to warp our character and distance us from God
 - And it has eternal consequences, as Hebrews warns

[Heb. 10:26](#) For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,

[Heb. 10:27](#) but a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries.

[Heb. 10:28](#) Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.

[Heb. 10:29](#) How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?

[Heb. 10:30](#) For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge His people."

[Heb. 10:31](#) It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

- In vs.40-42 Saul asks the people to tell him who violated the rule he set, but no one wants to say anything
 - That's not surprising for two reasons

- First, they would be exposing the king's son, which doesn't seem like a wise career move
- Secondly, the people were opposed to Saul's dumb rule and sympathetic with Jonathan's situation
- They knew he ate without realizing the rule existed and he needed the energy to prosecute the battle
- So when he doesn't get an answer, Saul decides to throw lots to determine where to place the blame
 - Throwing lots means using die to receive direction from the Lord concerning a yes or no question
 - So Saul begins by placing himself and his son on one side and all other soldiers on the other side and throwing the lot
 - Saul must have been surprised when the lot chose him and Jonathan over the people
 - Saul throws the lot again, and it indicates Jonathan over Saul, which means Jonathan is to blame
- The Lord is answering Saul according to the question posed, which was who violated the rule Saul set
 - The Lord is not agreeing with Saul's perspective however
 - Saul created this situation by speaking rashly, and now the Lord is simply pointing out the consequences of Saul's foolishness
 - So now Saul is on the spot to carry out the verdict
- Saul is the one who set the terms of this situation
 - He decided the rule, he decided the punishment in advance and he has now demanded a public accounting of the violation
 - So everything that's happened has been as a result of the king's actions
 - None of this was ordered by the Lord
 - Therefore, the king could reverse anything he's done
 - A king can make rules and change rules

- And if there was every a moment for Saul to step back from the brink of madness, confess his sin and repent, this would have been the perfect moment
 - He could have declared that the Lord has revealed his sin to him
 - That he sees the error of his ways and reverses his edict
 - Then Jonathan could have be spared and the people relieved to see their king hearing from God and doing His will
- But Saul disappoints again
 - Instead, he presses the case against his own son asking Jonathan to confess his crime
 - Jonathan explains that he ate a little honey
 - And then he says I must die
- It's not clear from the text if Jonathan is speaking sincerely or with sarcasm
 - He could be announcing his willingness to die in order to obey the king
 - That would be in keeping with Jonathan's upright character
 - Or he could be speaking sarcastically to highlight the ridiculousness of his father's actions
- Finally, Saul's pride pushes him to once again invoke the name of the Lord in declaring that Jonathan must surely die
 - Notice in v.44 Saul declares that the Lord must kill Saul if Jonathan doesn't die
 - Interestingly, it will happen that Saul and Jonathan will die in the same battle
 - It seems the Lord held Saul to his rash vows taking both his life and Jonathan's life according to Saul's words
 - But for now, Jonathan receives a reprieve made possible by the people, who refuse to carry out the penalty against Jonathan
 - The people declare to the king that Jonathan was responsible for the victory

- Therefore, it was ridiculous to think that he would be killed for eating a little honey
- The madness of the king has become apparent to everyone
- Yet by challenging Saul's decision, they plant a seed of paranoia in Saul's heart which will grow to consume him over time
 - Saul's great downfall was failing to submit to the Lord's authority as he ruled Israel
 - Instead, he did what was right in his own eyes
- In a sense, Saul was an extension of the time of Judges, in the sense that he acted independently of God
 - His dynasty was cut off because he failed to serve the Lord
 - In his place God will raise up a man after God's own heart
 - Which means David was a man determined to serve God even though he sinned as well

1Sam. 14:46 Then Saul went up from pursuing the Philistines, and the Philistines went to their own place.

1Sam. 14:47 Now when Saul had taken the kingdom over Israel, he fought against all his enemies on every side, against Moab, the sons of Ammon, Edom, the kings of Zobah, and the Philistines; and wherever he turned, he inflicted punishment.

1Sam. 14:48 He acted valiantly and defeated the Amalekites, and delivered Israel from the hands of those who plundered them.

- Since the Lord didn't give Saul permission to battle the Philistines, Saul disengages from the battle
 - Essentially, the Philistine garrison was removed from the hill country of Ephraim but the cities remained on the coast
 - Nevertheless, Saul and his armies continued to battle Israel's armies on all sides
 - And he would inflict great damage on his enemies thus keeping Israel defended
 - But notice Saul isn't vanquishing these enemies...he is merely a caretaker