3/12/23 - 1 Sam. 14:1-52 - "Sin Will Unravel Us"

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[0:00] 1 Samuel chapter 14.

One day, Jonathan, the son of Saul, said to the young man who carried his armor, Come, let us go over to the Philistine garrison on the other side. But he did not tell his father.
Saul was staying in the outskirts of Gibeah in the pomegranate cave at Migrin. The people who were with him were about 600 men, including Ahijah, the son of Ahithub, Ichabod's brother, son of Phinehas, son of Eli, the priest of the Lord in Shiloh, wearing Nephid.
And the people did not know that Jonathan was gone, that Jonathan had gone. Within the passes by which Jonathan sought to go over to the Philistine garrison, there was a rocky crag on the one side and a rocky crag on the other side.
The name of the one was Bozes and the name of the other, Senna. The one crag rose on the north in front of Michmash and the other on the south in front of Gibeah.
[1:12] 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.

And his armor-bearer said to him, Do all that is in your heart, do as you wish. Behold, I am with you heart and soul. Then Jonathan said, Behold, we will cross over to the men, and we will show ourselves to them.
If they say to us, Wait until we come to you, then we will stand still in our place, and we will not go up to them. But if they say, Come up to us, then we will go up, for the Lord has given them into our hand, and this shall be the sign to us.
So both of them showed themselves to the garrison of the Philistines. And the Philistines said, Look, Hebrews are coming out of the holes. Where they have one second, I have to flip. That's not part of the translation, don't worry.
Hidden themselves and the men of the garrison hailed Jonathan and his armor-bearer and said, Come up to us, and we will show you a thing. And Jonathan said to his armor-bearer, Come up after me, for the Lord has given them into the hand of Israel.
[2:26] Then Jonathan climbed up on his hands and feet and his armor-bearer after him, and they fell before Jonathan and his armor-bearer killed them after him. And that first strike, which Jonathan and his armor-bearer made, killed about 20 men within, as it were, half-froze length in an acre of land.

And there was a panic in the camp, in the field and among the people. The garrison and even the raiders trembled. The earth quaked, and it became a very great panic. And the watchmen of Saul and Gibeah of Benjamin looked, and behold, the multitude was dispersing here and there.
Then Saul said to the people who were with him, Count and see who has gone from us. And when they had counted, behold, Jonathan and his armor-bearer were not there. So Saul said to Ahijah, Bring the ark of God here.
For the ark of God went at that time with the people of Israel. Now while Saul was talking to the priest, the tumult in the camp of the Philistines increased more and more. So Saul said to the priest, Withdraw your hand.
Then Saul and all the people who were with him rallied and went into battle. And behold, every Philistine's sword was against his fellow, and there was very great confusion. Now the Hebrews who had been with the Philistines before that time, and who had gone up with them into the camp, even they also turned to be with the Israelites, who were with Saul and Jonathan.
[3:45] Likewise, when all the men of Israel who had hidden themselves in the hill country of Ephraim heard that the Philistines were fleeing, they too followed hard after them in the battle. So

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the Lord saved Israel that day, and that battle passed beyond Beth-Avon.

And the men of Israel had been hard-pressed that day. So Saul had laid an oath on the people, saying, Cursed be the man who eats food until it is evening, and I am avenged on my enemies.
So none of the people had tasted food. Now when all the people came to the forest, behold, there was honey on the ground. And when the people answered the forest, behold, the honey was dropping, but no one put his hand to his mouth, for the people feared the oath.
But Jonathan had not heard his father charge the people with the oath, so he put out the tip of the staff that was in his hand and dipped it in the honeycomb, and put his hand to his mouth.
And his eyes became bright. Then one of the people said, Your father strictly charged the people with an oath, saying, Cursed be the man who eats food this day. And the people were faint. Then Jonathan said, My father has troubled the land.
[4:53] See how my eyes have become bright because I tasted a little of this honey? 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.

They struck down the Philistines that day from Michmash to Ajalon, and the people were very faint.
The people pounced on the spoil and took sheep and oxen and calves and slaughtered them on the ground.
And the people ate them with the blood. Then they told Saul, Behold, the people are sinning against the Lord by eating with the blood. And he said, You have dealt treacherously. Roll a great stone to me here.
And Saul said, Disperse yourselves among the people and say to them, Let every man bring his ox or his sheep and slaughter them here and eat, and do not sin against the Lord by eating with the blood.
So every one of the people brought his ox with him that night, and they slaughtered them there. And Saul built an altar to the Lord. It was the first altar that he built to the Lord.
[5:54] Then Saul said, Let us go down after the Philistines by night and plunder them until the morning lights. 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. 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.
And Saul said, Come here, all you leaders of the people, and know and see how this sin has arisen today. 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. 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.
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.
[6:55] But if this guilt is in your people Israel, give Thummim. And Jonathan and Saul were taken, but the people escaped. Then Saul said, Cast the lot between me and my son Jonathan. And Jonathan was taken.

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. And Saul said, God do so to me and more also. You shall surely die, Jonathan.
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.
Then Saul went up from pursuing the Philistines, and the Philistines went to their own place. When Saul had taken the kingship over Israel, he fought against all his enemies on every side, against Moab, against the Ammonites, against Edom, against the kings of Zobah, and against the Philistines.
[7:59] Wherever he turned, he rooted them. And he did valiantly instruct the Amalekites, and delivered Israel out of the hands of those who plundered them. Now the sons of Saul were Jonathan, Ishvi, and Malchai-shua.

And the names of his two daughters were these. The names of the firstborn was Merib, and the name of the younger, Michal. And the name of Saul's wife was Ahinoam, the daughter of Ahimez.

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And the name of the commander of his army was Abner, the son of Ner, Saul's uncle. Kish was the father of Saul, and Ner, the father of Abner, was the son of Abiel.
There was hard fighting against the Philistines all the days of Saul. And when Saul saw any strong man, or any valiant man, he attached him to himself.
That is the word of the Lord. Quite a bit of words from the Lord this morning. It was a lengthy passage.
[9:01] Good job on those Hebrew names, too. Those always trip us up. But boy, to think that between last week's passage and the period we see here at the end of chapter 14, that's a single narrative.

The narrator is telling a story, and for the sake of not being here until the afternoon, like a bunch of faithful Puritans last week, for our two-hour-long sermons, we put a pause on the message last week.
But I hope that by the end of our time, we'll be able to see why exactly he's included the details of the passage that we see.
And to kind of help draw and revisit all that which was read, all that which was read, if you need to stretch your legs, you can stand up at this time and get a little blood circulating.
So, it gets to your brain. We're going to need our brains and our hearts this morning. I've kind of encapsulated with a couple different sermon titles that might help us ponder the different themes that we just read.
[10:22] I've kind of thrown a couple out on the table this week. The first one that I was thinking about was don't get too comfortable under the palmegranate tree as Saul was relaxing at the top of a hill covered in trees.

But then the other thing came into my mind. I saw the panic and him running around and kind of like clueless of what to do. And I labeled that sermon King Saul a story, a true story of Captain Jack Sparrow.
Him being the true Captain Jack Sparrow. For some reason, once I thought about that, I couldn't get that imagery out of my head. The other one was stay close to your leaders or they will make you starve.
That's right, deacons. Or just simply don't eat the honey. Simple, straightforward. Or we could have left this passage for a Father's Day sermon, right?
This would have been a great Father's Day sermon. What to do with disobedient sons who won't listen to you and eat the honey, right? Or possibly we could flip it on the other side for all the teenagers at youth group we could talk about National Kid Rebellion Day.
[11:29] Don't tell Dad, I'm gone. That would hit pretty good. We can save that for youth group. I'm looking at the youth leaders. No. No. Okay. But all of these could serve as a reminder of what's going on in this passage.

It's a little chaotic. And that might be the point. On a more serious note, I do believe that the most appropriate title for the sermon today that continues the narrative that we began last week is titled Sin Will Unravel You.
Sin Will Unravel Us, rather. Sin Will Unravel You. Sin Will Unravel You. Sin Will Unravel You. Sin Will Unravel You. Sin Will Unravel You. We have to recall that Saul was a king that you and I, we would have easily trusted.
Saul was a guy that seemed pretty fit for the job. He was tall. He was, he looked strong. And he was militarily capable of leading.
he was handsome if that created any bonus points. Right? He was attractive. And God's people followed him through the thick of it even to a pomegranate tree away from the enemy's camp.
[13:04] And God's Word has really been prodding our hearts through this series. It has been evident in our series. It's been evident in my personal time and study in this series.

It's concerning God's sovereignty over all things. It concerns God's judgment. It concerns the object and issue of sin in our lives as we've been studying it.
It talks about disobedience and obedience. And this will naturally continue into today because the passage has that as its theme. However, what we will see is precisely what the sermon title entails. Sin will unravel us. Sin will unravel us. Despite Saul's outward attractiveness, he was disqualified from being king.

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He was disobedient. And he was a king that the people desired, but God rejected. And it's important to remember that Saul's disqualification had nothing to do with his stupidity.
[14:13] We remember that even in Samson. And that gives me hope each and every Sunday here. His usefulness was not dependent upon his stupidity or wisdom.

His indecisiveness was not contingent upon his calling. It did not disqualify him. That reminds us of Jephthah in the Judges. Or weakness did not disqualify him.
We're reminded of that with Gideon. Or laziness, as we're reminded with Barak in Judges. No, Saul's disqualification was due to his disobedience from God's command.
Go, take care of the Philistine enemy, and then go and wait. Move from here to here and wait for your next instructions. Two simple instructions all the way back from chapter 10 that were unfulfilled and he was disobedient.
It's important for us to remember that. And for that, we find our greatest course of attention not upon Saul's incompetence.
[15:17] It's not solely upon his incompetence, but rather disobedience. Okay? It's not about him being dumb. That definitely doesn't help anything.

But it's not all about that. He was disobedient to God's command. And this is most vividly observed in the sin that begins to unravel with him.
And so, we're going to look at two different sections today of the passage. And I'd like to pray for our time in the Word today because while it does have some sense of humor, I'm trying to encapsulate the severity of it that sin will unravel us, this is a call for us to really take something serious in light of the comedy that the narrator includes in the passage.
So, let's pray right now and ask God to help all of us, even myself. Father, thank you for just the confidence that we can have that our qualifications are not contingent upon what we see with our eyes, but it's what you choose to bring about.
help us to see today, Lord, the seriousness of sin.
[16:50] How sin leeches in and just unravels our lives. Give me the words to speak to your flock today.

Empower me, Lord, with your spirits. Give us all clarity by the help of your spirits and work in this church like never before.
And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. The first section that we'll have today is responding to God's victory.
And the narrator of this episode, he begins very early on in chapter 14 with contrast.
It's sort of like we always talk about somatic things. Maybe I just talk about it, how, you know, in our day we have like a picture in picture.
[17:51] We're able to do that well in literary form. It's kind of difficult. But what happens is the narrator does that picture in picture. He looks at Jonathan, then pans the camera, paws on Jonathan, and pans the camera back to Saul.

And so we see that in here. It's kind of like, okay, Samuel has come, Saul was caught red-handed last week offering a sacrifice in order to keep people from not abandoning him to save face, and then Samuel comes walking in and he's like, whoa, I don't know, I thought this would help, you know, I mean, I was desperate.
It's a desperate plea here, come on, have a little bit of sympathy. And those words that echoed last week of what have you done of Samuel really echo into the chapter today.
And it's kind of like we have to ask, what's Jonathan and Saul up to? Jonathan seems to specifically in verse 1 to 3, he has different prerogatives than his father, as we'll see.
Jonathan is kind of out for blood. He's in the fight. He's in this seek and kill mentality.
[19:10] He's ready, he doesn't want to rest, and what's Saul doing? Resting and relaxing under his palm-granate tree. Jonathan has an armor-bearer and Saul has 300 military men with him around his palm-granate tree.

Proximity, Jonathan is right near the action. Saul's kind of up in a hill in the sticks, kind of away from any threats. Jonathan has an armor-bearer, Saul has an ephod-bearer.
Right? You see, it's just a simple few verses that the narrator is communicating the difference in the two men's hearts.
Jonathan's hearts and Saul's hearts. And this will be a developing theme through the entire passage today. What's Jonathan concerned about? Verse 4.

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He goes into the enemy camp between the two rocks. It was rough terrain and he speaks words of devotion not only to the battle but to the Lord.
[20:21] Verse 6, Jonathan said to the young man who carried his armor, come, let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised. He has absolutely no respect.

He's not even saying, he's accounting them basically two categories, either in God's promise or outside God's promise. He doesn't even consider them Philistines anymore. He has such distaste for the enemy, he refers to them as uncircumcised.
And look what he says, it may be that the Lord will work for us, for nothing can hinder the Lord from saving by many or by few.
That's a word to remind ourselves in, in our dire situations that seem like the odds are not in our favor. And verse 7, the armor bearer doubles down.
Do all that is in your heart, do as you wish, behold, I am with you, heart and soul. Man, can you just sense the object of his faith being in who God is?
[21:31] That he would stand against an entire massive army that has like ten times as many chariots, twice as many soldiers on horses, and he's going into the enemy's camp with an armor bearer.

That's faith. And he creates a little tactical discernment as we read, sort of like, well, if they call us to them, then we will attack and we'll know that God has given them into our hand.
But if they come down to us, we'll know that there's something off here and we should probably head for the hills. And so they allowed themselves to be caught in this area and they're kind of taunted by the enemy.
The enemy sees them knowing that the Philistines are powerful, they taunt the Israelites, they taunt Jonathan his armor bearer, oh, the Hebrews have come out to battle, ah, coming out of your cisterns, right?
Come up here, I'll show you a thing, here, right? And he took that as confirmation of God's blessing upon the battle. These two men assaulted within a very close proximity twenty men, two verses twenty, assaulted the enemy and Jonathan carried out a mission set aside for Saul and the Lord gave them victory once again.
[23:12] Just after an episode of Jonathan already stirring up the hornet's nest from last week, he's done it again. Jonathan is devoted to the mission of God.

All the Philistines at this point, they trembled. The earth quaked. The earth quaked. That's pretty significant.
And there was a great panic. Jonathan has truly done it again. Now, the narrator pauses on Jonathan.
It's panned over to Saul. What's Saul up to? Does he know what's going on? Well, Saul, he's taking a little R&R; underneath his pomegranate tree.
That's a tree in the actual translation in the Hebrew. And he's got all his men, 300 men. What's his concern? At realizing that something's going on, something that just recently happened of the enemy being stirred.
[24:16] Who's taking my victory here? Count all the men. I want to know who's gone. Who's doing this again? And then verse 17, he finds out it's his son once again.

And so I could see him probably laying in a hammock, eating a pomegranate, living his best life with his troops, no reason to be afraid, and his hammock flips over, he falls to the ground, pomegranate smashed in his face, suddenly chaos, running around, calling for the ark, calling for the priest, and then sitting with the priest, oh Lord, ah, forget the priest, and then we need to rally the troops, we need to get to the battlefield, forget this, forget that, and just mass chaos in the camp of the Israelites that interrupted his relaxation.
Only to arrive at mass chaos and confusion within the Philistines. The Philistines were literally fighting each other, they were so confused.
They were at each other, they were killing each other. Obviously, this would probably give somebody confidence to come out of their cistern, and like that head popping out of the chimney, like, oh, the battle's working in our favor, I guess we'll go to war.
They didn't have weapons, but they had a frying pan like Rapunzel. And so, let's take the frying pan to battle, right? Who stole the victory, though?

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[25:50] In fact, as Saul gathers his army, as frantic and as confused as the situation was, he had more time to figure out who was missing out of his army than to get his battle equipment ready for the fight.

He had more time when the troops started coming out of their cisterns to turn around and say, you know what? I'm not going to forgive you for abandoning me.
I'm going to raise the stakes a little bit on you, all you people who left me. Verse 24, Saul makes an oath of loyalty to this battle.
He says, you will not eat anything or you will be cursed until my victory is avenged. Where's Saul's heart?
And so, verse 25, they come to this forest, and I guess honeycomb dripping from a place is a thing that happens normal in this time and period.
[27:08] And the honeycomb was dripping, and the men who joined up with Jonathan, they saw Jonathan stick in his staff, and obviously, I mean, we get tired coming up these stairs, don't we?

Maybe I'm the only one. Not to mention all the stairs that I have to go up to my office. Right? We get famished at the silliest things.
These guys are out to war, and they can't even eat. Imagine depleting your most vital energies and resources. Anybody who has been in warfare, any veterans or retired veterans know that it takes a lot of energy, and you've got to eat to fuel yourself.
Jonathan had the common sense to eat when his body is saying you're probably going to either drop over dead or drop over because your blood sugar is plummeting. These guys come up to Jonathan, all concerned, Jonathan, you're going to have a curse.
Your father said not to eat, or you're going to die. Jonathan said, my father has troubled the land. See how my eyes have become bright because I had tasted a little of this honey, just a little of the honey brought his blood sugar back to normal.
[28:31] And how much better if the people would freely today take care of themselves with the enemy's spoil, the enemy's resources that they're defeating. For now, because they're not the defeat, in verse 30, the defeat among the Philistines has not been that great because we're out of shape.

We're not taking care of ourselves on behalf of my crazy father. making a little pledge of loyalty to this battle. In other words, my father is sick in the head.
He has no concern for this battle, can't you see? He has no concern for you, can't you see? You guys look like death walking, it looks like a resurrected military army of skeletons going out there trying to defeat the enemy.
money. But most of all, his father has no concern for God. He's got more concern for a pomegranate than he does of God's mission.
Now, you see, Jonathan's loyalty to his father was great, but Jonathan's loyalty to God was greater. It was greater, and even logically greater, to eat before you pass out.
[29:54] And although the Lord did save Israel that day, in verse 23, we were informed, the defeat has not been great. The soldiers are weak because of Saul's concern with himself, concern with his vengeance, and concern with the soldiers' loyalty to not depart from him once again.

And in verse 31, we see that they struck down the enemy, and the people were not just a little faint, but very faint, in verse 31.
Today, we might ask exactly, like, what's going on here? I mean, it's pretty clear. Covered a lot of that last week. But standing back from the Lord's victory, I believe that something is vividly clear in this contrast that the narrator gives us today.
Jonathan's concern drove himself to fight for God's honor, and Saul's concern drove himself to fight for Saul's honor.
It's all about Saul's honor and not God's honor. And church, when we concern ourselves with what we concern ourselves with most in this life, will reveal the condition of our hearts.
[31:24] The things that we put the most dire bit of our concern and attribute our concern to will reveal and attribute to the condition of our hearts, whether it's good or it's bad.

And church, when God calls us to an uneasy task that will require faith to complete, who are we to run and hide, similarly to last week, and find our cisterns and jump on in?
Or hide away under our pomegranate trees, living our best life without a worry or care in the world?
What's at stake, you might ask?

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What's so bad about receiving God's blessing and just enjoying things? God's honor is at stake when the proportion of our enjoyment exceeds our obedience to God, when it inhibits our ability to follow through with doing what God has called us to do.
Obedience is the means of honoring God, and that's the end of the story. Hesitating when God says, move, is an assault on God's honor, even if it's done in the name of prayer and fasting.
[32:48] Right? If God says to do something, and we're like, well, let me just pray about it a little bit more. Let me fast a little bit more. It doesn't get much more clear than that.

When God says, move, the church says, where? When God says, jump, the church says, how? Why? When God says do, the church considers it done.
Hesitation, hesitation is an assault on God's honor. Delayed obedience is, in fact, disobedience.
You see, the faith and loyalty of Jonathan is to be commended.
It is to be commended. Like I said, keep that verse, verse 7. handy, 6 and 7 handy for you when you feel like the odds are against you in this life.
Because those are words of truth. And the faith and loyalty of Jonathan is to be commended and will only grow and increase in our series as we will see Saul's replacement upon the horizon coming.
[33:58] God desires to bless his people but we often dilute that blessing by being preoccupied with ourselves.

With our honor, with our credit, with our agendas, responding to God's victory all wrapped up in ourselves.
like saying, boy, thank God I've been led here as a church member. This church surely would go to crap without me around, right?
Oh, danger, Will Robinson. Danger. When you respond to God's victory being wrapped up in yourself saying, thank God I'm here, you're the gift, you're the greatest gift to Christianity, Christianity, we do this often, subtly, not so obviously, but we do this subtly.
We do this even by putting aside the commands of God and utilizing them when they are convenient or when they are easy. We kind of pick and choose what we're able and what we want to do based on how we woke up in the morning.
[35:14] Being daylight savings last night, I'm sure you all are in a great mood today and all chipper and, but we do this so often, passivity, self-preservation, no risks at all, and Jesus Christ was anything than those things.

He was anything but those things. Church, to live habitually like this is living a godless life. You can raise your hands in the worship service all you want.
We saw that last week. You can do the religious formalism all you want, but you can't worship your way out of disobedience.
Such a life is sin, and as the sermon title entails, sin will unravel us. God's love. But a heart ruled by Christ will transform us.
It will renew our minds. It will invade our agendas. It will change our motives, and we will then live selflessly. And I want to finish this section before hitting a couple other points of the passage.
[36:39] But the second section is responding to God's silence, not only responding to God's victory and the good things that God does on behalf of His people and even us today, and the warning of our response to that.

But I also want to see responding to God's silence. And this will carry us to the end of chapter 14. Saul's reign does begin to, we'll just put it plainly, unravel.
unravel. His reign is unraveling as the chapter continues towards a close. And honestly, if you kind of look at the structure, you should be able to see an odd setup of verses within this passage. Because it's almost as if the narrator really has nothing left to say. Or else it's just going to be beating a dead horse. It's going to check.
My kids check out probably at the second or third page of a book that we read at night. I mean, the narrator's probably like, well, that's about it for Saul.
[37:54] You can copy and paste that with all these other victories because everything else was like that. Because we don't hear about the victories against the Moabites or the Ammonites or Edom, right?

We don't hear about the Amalekites. And the narrator almost says, well, here's all Saul's other victories and here's his family. Let's get on to what God is actually doing here.

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And so we should see that developing, that his reign is unraveling. And it is. Indeed, the verse that we read last week of Samuel rebuking him, you have done foolishly in trying to worship his way out of his disobedience.
This statement is the undercurrent of the remainder of this chapter. Saul's simply playing religion now. He's playing games, isn't he? Creating a foolish oath that's causing his troops to starve?
The soldiers were so famished that they didn't even have any concern. The moment that they were able to eat, once the victory was set, they probably had to say, Saul, are we done yet?
[39:09] Because we are hungry. Right? So they rushed to Outback Steakhouse, man, and they started chopping up that meat, and they have no concern. They're taking it rare.

They're taking it with the blood, and all of this is in disobedience to Leviticus's order of properly preparing meat because blood represented life. They had no concern with God's commands, God's order.
Who's to blame? Right? You see, Saul's action led an entire army to disobedience in God's command.
And he plays the righteous one. Look at him in the games that he plays. In verse 33, as he's unraveling, he says to his men, you have done treacherously for not preparing that meat properly. at the sight of their disobedience. Verse 38, all of a sudden he's trying to inquire from the priest, and God's silent.
[40:14] Ah, there must be sin in our midst. He's walking around sniffing his men. Can't smell his own stench. And then verse 43, he finds out and inquires of his son, tell me what you've done at the discovery of his son's betrayal and leaves his son to the slaughter.

I mean, can you see the unraveling of Saul? At the unraveling of Saul in this narrative, those he was leading even resort to this sort of dismissal mentality.
You know people that just habitually keep doing things, they're not going to change, and you're kind of just like, eh, do whatever you wish. It doesn't matter what we say anyhow, right?
They kind of get to that point. They say, do whatever seems good to you. A couple times to him. And Saul won't even listen to the priest. He says, let's, the priest says to him, let's draw near to God.
Let's not go back out to the battlefield yet. He gives his own son up to death. And his son, I mean, quite a death sentence, isn't it?
[41:36] I'm so sorry, Father. I ate the honey. Here I am. I'll die. I'll be the martyr at your disposal.

I did not follow this silly little oath. You're so obedient to God how righteous you are, right? His son stands before him and says, I'll give my life.
Yeah, that would be a good Father's Day sermon, I believe. But church, this is what we need to see, is that perpetual disobedience will lead to our unraveling.
Perpetual disobedience will lead to our unraveling. How might this look? Well, there's a couple symptoms when you might need to see the doctor, the great physician, is when other people's sin seems to become greater than your own.
And all of a sudden, when other people fall into sin and fall for temptation, we all of a sudden become expert law keepers, sinners. Another symptom is that when God is silent, we blame others for His silence.
[43:01] We blame our circumstances for His silence. Never once to consider that we are to blame for His silence. Now, qualifier, that's not to say that God does not lead faithful Christians in a season of silence to draw near to Him.

But regardless of your disobedience or your faithfulness to God, and God is silent, you ought to draw near at those seasons. That is a season of drawing near in God's silence. Either way.
But the third symptom of what this might look like to see the doctor is that when we are betrayed, we seek vengeance.
We seek vengeance. You see, the narrator reveals the toxicity of sin, especially when it's done habitually.
And it's contagious. And it's severity, it only grows the longer it festers within the assembly of God's people. And this is what we need to focus on as we begin to wind down in the narrative.
[44:21] Because the model of a Christian life, it runs along the course of an obedient trajectory. Okay? It's not saying that we are all of a sudden Christians and we're perfect.

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I don't think that someone who's been a Christian the longest can probably within this room say that, yeah, you're still a work in progress and that we all are. However, along the course of Christian life is an obedient trajectory.
That we can see the way of obedience and that is our aim in life. We will imperfectly be on our course and sometimes fall and stumble here and there, but by no means do we ever lose track of the course and the trajectory of our lives.
It's a model of life of discipline. In our church, in an assembly of believers, it's seen through church discipline.
When we sin, we take care of it. We spur one another on to good works. Right? Taking responsibility for our actions and when our attitudes are maligned.
[45:48] Unraveling sin before it unravels us. Church, and most importantly, there is the model of Jesus Christ who is our trajectory.

Who, like Jonathan, stood wrongfully accused and offered himself up to the slaughter saying, similarly, here I am. I will die. Jesus lived and modeled a life worthy of emulation for every Christian. A life of surrender and obedience, not convenience, even to the points of Christ's death on the cross, whose obedience satisfies the demands of the law on our behalf, and we are imputed His righteousness.
It's given to us. He earned it. We trust in it. He did the work. We have faith in His work. In other words, perfect obedience is found in Jesus Christ and becomes the trajectory of our lives.
There's not many other options when Jesus says to His disciples, take up your cross and follow Me. I don't know what you expect in the Christian life, but that doesn't leave a lot of room for options.
[47:12] that doesn't leave a lot of room for, eh, I don't feel like doing that today. I'm not going to do that today.

Just a little bit of sin here and there. Church, don't you see this as a literal call to the Christian life? It's encapsulated in an attitude of, here I am, I will die.
I will die to the desires of my flesh. I will die to the enticement of sin in my life, and I will take my cross, and I will follow.
When a church surrenders their sin, surrenders their blame and betrayal, God is faithful to restore that Christian, to bless that Christian, to protect that Christian.
not a single act of religious formalism will be able to change the course of your disobedience. You might be saying, wow, I was looking for something else today and found that I feel quite convicted today, according to the message.
[48:30] But better you deal with it now, just as Saul should have. God, we know that you can't change the course of your disobedience apart from repentance.

You can't make any rash oaths. You can fast the rest of your life, but if your life remains in disobedience, you're not doing anything to repent and to be restored.
You can't make any rash sacrifices. You can't do that. You can sell your house all you want. You can live under the bridge on the overpass.
You can sell all your possessions. You can seek out extra revelatory oracles. Give me a sign. I've scoured the Bible.
I've sat in silence. I don't know, Brent. Maybe I'll see that psychic down the road. Seek out all these signs.
[49:34] The course of disobedience ends with the simple statement, here I am, I will die.

I will die to my flesh. I will die to my disobedience. I will die to making the hard decision of picking up a cross and following Jesus. God has really made obedience rather simple for Saul and us today. follow his word and move when God says move. And at that, we tell the Lord, here we are. We'll die. And so, as we kind of close, this tragic comedy of a narrative, the most tragic aspect of the narrative thus far is that it didn't have to end this way.
God is looking for obedience. And where obedience is found, blessing awaits.
It's so simple and we can't get it. And thus, Saul unraveled and God prepares for his replacement.
[50:49] And we'll get into that preparation next week. And there's much more to hear about Saul. We'll get into that as a contender rises up. A strong man who Saul tries to take under his arm, only to realize that he is Saul's replacement.

And then things get a little dicey. But the narrator ends the story of what seems to exhausted the points and ends it. Here's Saul's army.

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Here's his family. There's nothing else to say. He's a bonehead. He's not the guy that God chose. And he led selfishly. So the failure that played out last week in chapter 13 and continued in today is obvious.
Saul did not trust or obey God. God was silent. And this is usually always a time to draw near to God. But Saul finds himself completely lost. And that is the end of the story.
But friends, this does not have to be the end of your story. I believe any of us probably can find a little bit of sympathy for Saul.
[51:57] Like we kind of feel bad for him. He was just looking for his donkeys. Why are we so hard on him? Why doesn't God give him a little bit of a break? He's just trying his best. I believe that many of us can find it easy to feel bad for Saul, sympathize with his struggle, because we know weakness very well.

We know that weakness. Saul is the epitome of a failure. And those who, those of us who can reflect upon our own failures in our lives sort of find this empathetic sympathy.
Because we know what it is like to forget God, to really not trust God, to even disobey God. And we know this is foolish. But what we see is what Saul was blind to.
And that makes all the difference. And that's why our story as a church today does not have to end that way. Church, this is good news.
Because at the more vivid revelation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, we see that when we reckon with our weakness, it is the beginning of God empowering us with his strength.
[53:18] When we find the end of ourselves, it's the beginning where we find God. You see, it is only by God's strength that we can say, here we are, we will die in the most treacherous situations that we can experience in this life.

And thus, it is only by God's strength that we can continue to obey according to Matthew. And the Lord Jesus said, Matthew 7, everyone who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.
And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house. But it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock.
Church, don't leave today not seeing that everything that God had promised had come to pass in Saul's life. His word came true, and if his word says that if we hear his words and do them, that is something we ought to do regardless of convenience, ease, or self-preservation.
For some of us, this will serve as a reminder. For others, a correction, and yet still others may be a wake-up call today in our wonderful nation that seems to confuse Christian nationalism with what it actually means to be a Christian.
[54:48] Christian. But no matter how it pans out for us today, when God is faithful to His church, His church ought to find every excuse to be faithful in return.

And so, for that, it is time to unravel our sin, lest our sin unravel us. And this is the call for us in chapter 14.
Thank you.

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