

# The Early Success of Saul

by Chuck Smith

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*The sermon emphasizes the dangers of pride and disobedience, and the importance of faith and trust in God, using the story of Saul and Jonathan as examples.*

**Duration:** 25:05

**Scripture:** 1 Samuel 13:1-2, 1 Samuel 14:7-10, Romans 8:31

**Topics:** "Saul"

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## Description

In this sermon, Pastor Chuck Smith focuses on the early success of Saul as the king of Israel. Saul reigned for one year and then chose 3,000 men to form a standing army, with 2,000 under his leadership and 1,000 under his son Jonathan. Jonathan takes the initiative and attacks the Philistine garrison in Gibeah, while Saul blows the trumpet to announce their victory. Pastor Chuck emphasizes the importance of stepping out in faith and being available for God to work, just as Jonathan did. He highlights that God can accomplish His purposes with many or with few, as long as His presence is with them.

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## Transcript

Oh, let the Son of God enfold you With His Spirit and His love Let Him fill your heart and satisfy your soul  
Oh, let Him have the things that hold you And His Spirit like a dove Will descend upon your life And make you whole  
Welcome to The Word for Today, the broadcast ministry of Pastor Chuck Smith of Calvary Chapel, Costa Mesa, California. Pastor Chuck is currently leading us on a verse-by-verse venture through the entire Bible. And on today's edition of The Word for Today, we'll be focusing on the early success of Saul.

As we pick up in 1 Samuel, chapter 13, verse 1. And now with today's message, here's Pastor Chuck Smith. So Saul reigned one year, and when he had reigned two years over Israel, so we passed a year quite quickly here, all within one verse. Saul chose him 3,000 men of Israel, whereof 2,000 were with Saul in Michmash and in Mount Bethel, and 1,000 were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin.

And the rest of the people he sent every man to his tent. So the rest of the people were business as usual, back in their different villages, but Saul for the first time had now a standing army. 2,000 men under his leadership, 1,000 under his son Jonathan.

And here's how the story goes. Jonathan smote the garrison of the Philistines that was in Gibeah, and the Philistines heard of it, and Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land of Israel, saying, Let all the

Hebrews hear. And all of Israel heard say that Saul had smitten the garrison of the Philistines.

So here is Jonathan out doing the fighting, and Saul's blowing the trumpet. So that all the people hear that Saul is out destroying the Philistines. It's taking glory for another man's work.

And this, of course, is involved with a bit of pride. The man who started out so humble, as we saw him last week, begins to develop this dreaded thing of pride. One thing that God hates.

In fact, there are seven things that God hates, but one of those, of the seven, is a proud look, a haughty spirit. And the scripture warns us that pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall. The man who started out in such deep humility gets a taste of glory, adulation, begins to feed on it.

So Jonathan smote the Philistines at Giba, the garrison of the Philistines, and Saul blew the trumpet in Israel, so all of Israel heard that Saul had smitten the Philistines. And that Israel also had an abomination with the Philistines or was held by the Philistines as an abomination, and the people were called together after Saul to Gilgal. So having the Philistine garrison at Giba having been smitten by Jonathan, the Philistines were going to retaliate and seek to wipe out Israel.

So the two nations are preparing for war. So Saul calls the people of Israel to gather at Gilgal, assemble here, that we might face this invading Philistine army. And the Philistines gathered themselves together to fight with Israel, 30,000 chariots, 6,000 horsemen, and people as the sand which is on the seashore in multitude.

And they came up and pitched in Michmash eastward from Beth-Avon. So Saul called the men of Israel to come to Gilgal, and the Philistines gathered a tremendous army with 30,000 chariots, 6,000 horsemen, and when you see the phrase as the sand of the sea, it means there's so many you couldn't count them, more than you can count, just an innumerable host of infantry. And when the men of Israel saw the Philistine army, that they were in a strait, the people were distressed, and then the people hid themselves in caves, in the thickets, in the rocks, and in the high places, and in the pits, wherever you can find a hiding place.

They began to hide. Tremendous army you've got, Saul. And some of the Hebrews went over Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead.

And as for Saul, he was yet in Gilgal, and all of the people followed him trembling. I mean, this was an awesome, fearsome scene. The Philistines with these chariots, they were like tanks.

And the children of Israel, defenseless against these chariots. Also the horsemen. And so he tarried for seven days according to the set time that Samuel had appointed, but Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and the people were scattering from Saul.

Now Samuel had evidently said to Saul, look, I'll be there in Gilgal in seven days. He no doubt sent out a SOS to Samuel, and Samuel said, I'll be there in seven days. And seven days came, and Samuel hadn't shown up yet, and the people were beginning to scatter.

And so Saul said, bring hither a burnt offering to me, and a peace offering. And he offered the burnt offering. And it came to pass that as soon as he had made an end of the offering, of the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came, and Saul went out to meet him, that he might greet him.

And Samuel said, what have you done? And Saul said, because I saw that the people were scattering from me, and that you did not come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines had gathered themselves together at Michmash, I forced myself, I said, therefore, the Philistines will come down now upon us to Gilgal, and I've not made a supplication to the Lord. And so I forced myself, therefore, and I offered the burnt offering. Now, Saul was not a priest.

He had no business offering a sacrifice to the Lord, not being a priest. This was the duty of the Levites. They were the priestly tribe.

He had no right to approach God. Even being the king, he did not have the authority to offer a sacrifice. He's intruding in an area where God did not call him.

Now, even as we saw last week, when he was to be proclaimed the king over Israel and he hid himself, and we pointed out the folly of trying to hide from the call of God. When God has called you to a task, you try to hide from that. That's folly.

It is equally foolish to venture into a task for which God has not called you. God had not called him into the priesthood. For him to endeavor to enter into the area of the priesthood was just as much folly as it was to try to escape the call of God from what God had called him to do.

I'm afraid that a lot of people today are serving the Lord out of pressure. Not because of calling, not because God has called you or gifted you in an area, but you've been pressured to do certain things for God. And if you're doing it under pressure, you're not comfortable with it, you're resenting it, you should not endeavor to do anything that God has not called you to do.

Now, notice Saul was offering a lame excuse. Saul did develop into a man with a lot of excuses, and quite often they were sort of religious kind of excuses. We'll find him next study excusing other actions that are inexcusable.

The Philistines were there. I was afraid they were going to come down. You didn't show up.

And so I forced myself and offered the burnt offering. But Samuel said, Saul, you have done foolishly because you did not keep the commandment of the Lord your God. Whenever you fail to keep the commandment of the Lord your God, you're acting foolishly.

Why? Because God knows what's best for us. Whenever I cross with God's will, with God's word, that's foolish. Because that is saying I know better than God in this situation.

It's foolish to think that I know better than God. You have done foolishly for you did not keep the commandment of the Lord your God, which he commanded you. For now, would the Lord have established the kingdom upon Israel forever? You could have been.

God would have perpetuated your family, the dynasty of Saul, but your kingdom shall not continue. For the Lord has sought him a man after his own heart, and the Lord has commanded him to be captain over his people, because you have not kept that which the Lord commanded thee. So because of his disobedience, because you've rejected God, really, from reigning over you, God has rejected you from reigning over the people.

God is seeking a man after his own heart, or has sought a man and anointed him. And, of course, we know because we know the story and we've read ahead. We know that David is that man after God's heart that God chose to be the captain over his people.

So Saul rejected. And from here on, for Saul, it's downhill. Downhill.

An interesting thing about Saul, though God has now rejected him from being the king over Israel, and God has anointed another one to be king, Saul will continue on the throne, and he will seek by the dint of force to hold the throne and to overthrow God's anointed to keep David from the throne. Holding on to that which is no longer rightfully his, seeking to drive out from the kingdom the man whose right it is. We have much like that in the world today.

You see, when Jesus died upon the cross, he paid the price for the redemption of the world. It now technically belongs to Jesus. He bought it.

He paid the price. He paid the price in full. However, Satan continues to sit on the throne and is doing his best by force to keep Jesus from reigning.

But the day came when Saul was deposed and David sat upon the throne. Even as the day, thank God, is coming and not very far in the future, I trust and pray, when Satan is destroyed and Jesus takes his rightful place and rules upon the throne over the earth and his kingdom comes and his will is done here on earth even as it is in heaven. So the Lord has rejected you, sought a man after his own heart and commanded him to be captain.

And Samuel arose and got up from Gilgal unto Gibeah of Benjamin, and Saul numbered the people that were present with him, 600 men. Oh, my. He had an army of 3,000.

That means 2,400 are deserters. And, of course, the rest of the volunteers, they're gone too. 600 men to face 30,000 chariots, 6,000 horsemen, and an innumerable infantry of the Philistines.

And Saul and Jonathan, his son, and the people that were present with him abode there at Gibeah of Benjamin, but the Philistines encamped in Michmash. And the spoilers came out of the camp of the Philistines in three divisions. One company turned unto the way that leads to Ophrah, the land of Saul.

The other company turned the way to Bethhoran. Another company turned the way of the border that looks toward the valley of Zibuan, toward the wilderness. Now there was no smith found throughout all of the land of Israel, that is, blacksmith, for the Philistines said, lest the Hebrews make them swords or spears.

But all of the Israelites went down to the Philistines to sharpen every man his plowshare, or his culture, or his axe, or his mattock. Yet they had no file for the mattocks, or for the cultures, or for the forks, or for the axes, and to sharpen the goads. So it came to pass in the day of battle that there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people that were with Saul and Jonathan, but only Saul and Jonathan, his son, had spears.

And the garrison of the Philistines went out to the passage of Michmash. So, here you have the people from an Iron Age with their swords, their spears, with their chariots, and here you have 600 men, ill-equipped, only two spears and swords among the crowd. The rest of them with sticks, or slings, or sharpened ox goads.

What a mismatch. This vast army of the Philistines against this rag-tag group that is following Saul. So it came to pass upon a day that Jonathan, the son of Saul, said to the young man that carried his armor, Come on, let's go over to the Philistines' garrison on the other side.

But he didn't tell his father. And Saul tarried in the uttermost part of Gibeah under a pomegranate tree, which is in Migrahn. And the people that were with him were about 600 men.

And Ahaiah, the son of Ahithob, Ichabod's brother, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eli, the Lord's priest in Shiloh, was wearing the ephod, and the people did not know that Jonathan was gone. Jonathan and his armor bearers slipped out of the camp. Back in the camp, the grandson of Eli was there wearing the ephod of the high priest.

And between the passages by which Jonathan sought to go over under the Philistine garrisons, there was a sharp rock on the one side and on the other side. The one's name was Bozes, the other's name was Sina. And the forefront of the one was situate northward over against Michmash, and the other southward over against Gibeah.

So there is this pass, and it is there today. And on the north side and on the south side there are these two steep rock outcroppings, jagged rocks. They go just about straight up.

And the passage goes between these two rocks. But those that are standing up on the rocks can easily defend the passage because of the advantage of the height shooting down and so forth at those that are trying to come through the passage. And so this is where Jonathan is heading in this passage that leads to the whole army of the Philistines are over there with their 30,000 chariots and everything else.

And he's heading towards Michmash in this passage that is guarded by the Philistines. And Jonathan said to the young man that bore his armor, come and let us go over under the garrison of the uncircumcised. It may be that the Lord will work for us for there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few.

Come on, let's go over and see what God might want to do today. Who knows? Maybe God wants to wipe out the Philistines. And if God wants to wipe out the Philistines, he doesn't need the whole army.

God can wipe out the Philistines using just one man as easily as he can the whole army. I love the logic of this because it's sound. You see, there is the proper understanding of the greatness of God.

God really doesn't need man to do his work. He doesn't need a multitude of men. God can work through one man who is committed and dedicated to him.

He doesn't need the whole army. It's no restraint with God or no problem for God to work whether with many or with few. All we need is God to work.

It may be that God wants to work. How are you going to find out? You can only find out by venturing out in faith, stepping out and see what God might want to do. I love to venture out in faith.

To me it's exciting and I do it all the time. I step out in faith to see what God might be wanting to do. I love it.

But you make yourself available. Lord, here I am. If you want to work today, let's go for it.

If not, that's alright too. But Lord, I'm available in case you want to work. And Jonathan was just going over on just the possibility.

It may be that God might want to work. Let's go over and see. He realized that if God was with him, he could wipe out the whole army of the Philistines by himself as long as God was with him.

Chariots and all. We'll take them all on. As Paul said to the Romans, If God be for us, who can be against us? Oh, that we might realize the full implication of that.

If God is for you, who can be against you? So the armor bearer said unto him, Do all that is in your heart. Behold, I'm with you according to all that's in your heart. Hey, that's the kind of friend they have.

Hey man, you're going to be crazy. Go for it. But I'll go with you.

Do what's in your heart. I'll be with you. I'll go along.

I like that. We'll return with more of our verse-by-verse study of 1 Samuel in our next lesson as we focus on the selfish curse of Saul. And we do hope you'll make plans to join us.

But right now, I'd like to remind you that if you missed any part of today's message or perhaps you'd like to order a copy for that special friend or loved one, you can do so by simply contacting one of our customer service representatives, and they'd be more than happy to assist you with the ordering details. Simply call 1-800-272-WORD and phone orders can be taken Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Pacific Time. Once again, our toll-free number is 1-800-272-9673 And for your added convenience, you can order online anytime when you go to [TheWordForToday.org](http://TheWordForToday.org). And while you're there, be sure to browse through the additional resources that include Bible studies, commentaries, CDs, DVDs, and so much more.

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And be sure to join us again next time as Pastor Chuck Smith continues his verse-by-verse study through the book of 1 Samuel. That's right here on the next edition of The Word for Today. And now, once again, here's Pastor Chuck Smith.

I'd like to encourage you to take some ventures in faith this week. It may be God wants to work, and all He needs is you. Just making yourself available.

May we commit ourselves to the work of God. May we venture out in faith, trusting the Lord to do His work through our lives. May God bless you and be with you, and strengthen you in every good work.

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