

PRECEPTS FOR LIFE
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SERIES: I Samuel, Part 1 (The Heart of a Leader)

THURSDAY

OPEN

Have you ever said something, promised something, swore by so and so that you were going to, and all of a sudden it comes time to make that pay check for what you said, how did you feel? Maybe it was a promise to one of your children. Maybe it was a promise to your mate. Maybe it was a promise to your boss, “O, I can do it. I swear to you I can do it,” and then you find out hey, I shouldn’t have made that promise. What do you do then?

PART ONE

Well beloved I opened the program talking about making a promise, swearing to do something. It’s called an oath. And as we look at 1 Samuel 14, and we’re going to start at verse 24, I want you to mark the word oath. You could just put a circle around it. You could just pick a color and circle it and mark it, because I want you to see how important this word oath is. And then I’ve got other things to mark, but just let’s put ourselves back in context. Remember Jonathan and his armor bearer have slipped out and they have gone up to the garrison of the uncircumcised, those Philistines and

they, the two of them have taken out 20 of the Philistines, and this has caused a great trembling. At the same time Saul, with his men following this, have gone against the Philistines and they have had a great victory and the Lord delivered Israel on that day, and the battle spread beyond Beth-aven. Now in verse 24: “Now the men of Israel were hard-pressed on that day, for Saul had put...,” had put, past tense, “...the people under oath...,”(1Samuel 14:24a) You want to mark oath there. “...saying, ‘Cursed be the man who eats food before evening, and until I have avenged myself on my enemies....’”(14:24b) You know I don’t like the word I there. And it shows me something about Saul. It shows me how centered Saul is on Saul. And remember one of the things I told you is you want to start keeping a list of the things that you learn about Saul. Now you’ve learned very clearly that Saul did not obey God’s command, that Saul became impatient. He got tired of waiting for Samuel. And this was in 1 Samuel 13. And consequently he went ahead and he disobeyed God and God said, “Okay, I’m removing the kingdom from you because I’m looking for a man after My own heart.” And a man after God’s heart does what God wants. A man after God’s own heart obeys God. So what you see here is he’s saying, “...‘Cursed be the man who eats food before evening, and until I have avenged myself on my enemies....’”(14:24b) Now if you’re marking the references, the big references to Saul, I would mark the I here. And I would color it the same as the color that I picked for Saul. “...So none of the people tasted food.”(14:24c) Now what does this mean? This means that all these people who don’t have these weapons, who are scared to death of the Philistines have gone to battle, but they have gone to battle in a fasting state. Now to go without food, when you fast for the first day, you’re weak. I mean you, you get a headache or you’re just weak. After you fast for several days then you get energy, but not right at the beginning. So you’ve got these men going to battle, and none of them have eaten. “[And] All the people of the land entered the forest, and there was honey on the ground. [And] 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.”(14:25-26) the oath saying “...‘Cursed be the man who eats food before evening...,”(14:24b) and it was not before evening. Okay, and so they saw that honey, but they

wouldn't even touch it. "But Jonathan..." contrast here, "...had not heard when his father put the people under [the] oath..." Circle it "...therefore..."(14:27a) and when I come to a therefore, a therefore is a term of conclusion, so I put three red dots in a triangle, in the shape of a triangle. "...therefore, he put...the end of the staff that was in his hand and dipped it in[to] the honeycomb, and put his hand to his mouth, and his eyes brightened."(14:27b) All right now, what I want you to see and the importance of the therefore in marking it is when you mark all this and you look at it, you see hey, the people were under an oath; Jonathan hadn't put himself under the oath, because he didn't know about the oath, "...therefore, he put...the end of his staff...into the honey...[touched] his mouth, and his eyes were brightened."(14:27b) I want to stop there and say one day when I was on an extended fast I became so weak; I was staying at a friends house. And I became so weak and I want to stay on the fast, but I knew that I had to do something, and I remembered this verse. And so I went down to the cupboard of my friend; it was Grace Kinser's house and opened that and found some honey, and I just dipped my finger, I think, right into the honey jar, pulled it out and just sucked my finger with that honey on it, and my energy came back. Why? That honey goes straight to the blood stream and lifts your sugar in your body and your eyes brighten and that's what happened. So if you're ever fasting and you just get so weak that's a good thing to do. All right, verse 28: "Then one of the people [answered and] said, 'Your father strictly put the people under oath, saying, "Cursed be the man who eats food"....,' And the people were weary."(14:28) They had seen that honey and I'm telling you they were drooling over that honey, and that honey wasn't a woman. That honey was the honeycomb. And they were drooling over it, but they said, "Hey, your father said cursed be the man who eats food today." Well, they didn't want a curse on them. "...And the people were weary. Then Jonathan said, 'My father has troubled the land. See now, how my eyes...brightened because I tasted a little of this honey. 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.'"(14:28b-30) In other words the people were so weary that they couldn't really carry out the fullness of the battle, because the battle

remember, spread beyond Beth-aven. But the people just couldn't fight anymore. And so Jonathan said, "If my father had not done this, you know, we could have won this battle. We could have killed far more Philistines." What do you do when you make a rash oath, when you make a promise? Well you stop and you say, "Wait a minute. I shouldn't have said that." But listen; if you make that oath and it goes out of your mouth then you really have to stand by it. An oath was very, very important. Now I don't want to take time in this study to stop and look at oaths and promises because I want us to go on. I don't want us to lose the story, because the story is beyond the oath. But I just want you to see that the words that come out of your mouth are very important and you don't want to speak rashly. And when you speak, when you promise something or when you say you're going to do something... You know I made a promise to the people on our mailing list, you know, the people on our mailing list are so important to me; it's not like they're just numbers. It's not like we're trying to get money out of them or that. It's a real ministry to me when I write that monthly letter. And I made a promise that if you would write and tell me where you were spiritually I would help you go forward. And then I got sick as a dog. And so all these response cards piled up. But I had to keep my promise. And I remember saying to Becky, who's my assistant, who's my armor bearer, "Becky, if I do this again you've got to stop and remind me that I've got to schedule this and have it in my schedule so that I don't drive us all crazy and don't exhaust us." And so this is what happened. Saul, with his rash promise exhausted the people and kept them from a victory that they could have had. But it gets even worse than that. Let's look at it. Verse 31, he says: "[And] they struck among the Philistines that day from Michmash to Aijalon. And the people were very weary. [And] 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."(14:31-32) You want to mark blood. Okay, and I just do three red drops over the word blood, and I just put one above one of the O's and then in the center O and then one underneath. Why? Because the children of Israel were not allowed to eat anything with blood in it. And it says, "[And] Then they told Saul, saying, 'Behold, the people are sinning...'"(14:33a) And you want to mark sinning. Any time

you come to sin or rebellion or something that is against God, a transgression, a trespass; I color it brown. "...Behold, the people are sinning against the Lord by eating with the blood.'..." Mark the blood. "...And he said, 'You have acted treacherously; roll a great stone to me...',"(14:33b) You say, "Well what were they doing eating now, when they wouldn't eat the honey?" Honey, it is evening now and they are so hungry that they can't wait. I mean there are times when I get in the house, and I am so hungry. One of my sons was hypoglycemic, David. And if he could not eat he was a bear. And so I just learned to come to his rescue, to have something, if dinner wasn't ready, for him to put into his mouth. Well these guys, Saul's men were ravenous and they didn't even lay those animals on a stone. They just slew them right on the ground in the dirt, in the grass, and they ate them with the blood. "[And] 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..." Got it; it's night. "...brought each one his ox with him and slaughtered it there."(14:34) They're slaughtering it where? On a great stone. And it says, "And Saul built an altar to the Lord..." This is very interesting. It was the first altar that he built to the Lord."(14:35) We'll talk about that when we come back.

PART TWO

Welcome back my friend, and you are my friend and you are beloved of the Lord, and you are precious to me. Well let's look at this. Saul, for the first time, this is the first altar that Saul built to the Lord. Now what does that tell you? It shows you that all this time here Saul has been the king of Israel and he hasn't even built an altar to the Lord. He hasn't stopped where he might worship God. And you'll see this as we go along, you'll see the importance of this altar to the Lord. It's a place of sacrifice. It's a place of worship. It's a place of remembering that God is God. Now, am I saying put an altar in your house? No, because we have moved, as it says in the gospel of John in the fourth chapter, that God is looking for those who worship Him in spirit and in truth, that the time has come when we worship Him that way, so we don't

have the altars anymore. Verse 37: “Then Saul said, ‘Let us go down after the Philistines by night and take spoil among them until the morning light....’”(1Samuel 14:36a) In other words, we’ve just eaten. We’re full; now let’s go on down and let’s take away the spoil, “...and let us not leave a man [among] them....”(14:36b) In other words, If we find anyone that hasn’t been killed, that’s just wounded, let’s go put them to death. “...And they said, ‘Do whatever seems good to you.’ So the priest said, ‘Let us draw near to God here.’”(14:36c) In other words, okay this is what Saul wants to do, and this is what the people are saying that we’re to do, but what is God saying for us to do? So there’s that chaplain again. And that chaplain is reminding them that the battle is the Lord’s and that victory comes from the Lord, not from anybody else. So you better know, is this of God that you go and do this. And so, “Saul inquired of God....”(14:37a) Now remember they have the ephod there. The ephod would hold the breast piece and the breast piece would have the Urim and the Thummim and would light up and the priest could get direction from God. “[So] Saul inquired of God, ‘Shall I go down after the Philistines? Will [Thou] give them into the hand of Israel?’ But He did not answer him on that day.”(14:37b) In other words, hey, nothing lit up on that breast piece. Nothing, it was like there was a disconnect. And there’s no voice on the other end of the line. I mean you’re talking to someone; I was talking to my little granddaughter the other day, because we talk on the phone every day, and we usually talk when her daddy picks her up from school and we’re on the cell phone. And all of a sudden she wasn’t there; there was a disconnect. All right, there’s a disconnect now. And it says, “[And] Saul said, ‘Draw near here, all you chiefs of the people, and investigate and see how this sin has happened today.’”(14:38) There’s got to be sin in the camp cause God’s not answering us. So you want to mark sin again. Color it brown. ““For as the Lord lives, who delivers Israel, though it is in Jonathan my son, he shall surely die.’...”(14:39) Whoa! I mean listen to this rash word that is coming out of the mouth of Saul. It’s like an oath. It’s like he’s saying okay, if that sin’s in my son Jonathan, then he is going to die. Now, when you come to any reference to death, and I show you this in your study guide and you need to download this if you don’t have it. You need to download it so you that you can mark the text so

you can learn how to study your Bible, because you only learn by doing, not just by listening. Okay, so you download it at preceptsforlife.com, and you'll see how to mark every reference to death or dying if you don't know how. I just take a black pen and I draw a tombstone, okay. And it says, "... 'he shall surely die.' But not one of the people answered him." (14:39b) Now what did the people know? The men knew that Jonathan had eaten of the honey, and they knew about the curse. "[And] Saul said, 'Draw near here, all you chiefs of the people...,'" (14:38b) Verse 39: "'For as the Lord lives, who delivers Israel, [even] though it[']s... Jonathan my son, he shall surely die.' But not one of... the people answered him. Then he said to all Israel, 'You shall be on one side and I and Jonathan my son shall be on the other side.'..." (14:39-40b) So he divided them physically. And on one side he put everybody, and on the other side he just put himself and Jonathan. Now get the picture; put it in your mind. "... And the people said to Saul, 'Do what seems good to you.' Therefore Saul said to the Lord, the God of Israel, 'Give a perfect lot.' And Jonathan and Saul were taken, but the people escaped." (14:40b-41) So they cast lots. Okay, which lot is going to show; is it in the camp or is it in my son or in me? And so it was in Saul or Jonathan. It was not in the people. "[And] Saul said, 'Cast lots between me and Jonathan my son.'..." (14:42a) Now he's telling Ahijah to do this. And he says, "... 'Cast lots between me and Jonathan my son.' And Jonathan was taken." (14:42) Ooh, God just fingered Jonathan. You say, "O no, God didn't finger Jonathan; it was just the way the lot came out. Whoa, so here's where we have to stop and do a little cross-referencing. All right now, what I did is I marked this right in my Bible, and I wrote it with a pencil in the margin of my Bible so that if I ever want to look at it again, I can save myself a lot of time and a lot of study. So I want us to go; first of all I wrote down casting lots. Underneath it I put Joshua 7:14. And under Joshua, chapter 7, verse 14 this is what I read. He says, "'In the morning... you shall come near by your tribes. And it shall be that the tribe which the Lord takes by lot shall come near by families,... the family which the Lord takes shall come near by households... the household[s] which the Lord takes shall come near man by man.'" (Joshua 7:14) In other words they cast lots. And they cast lots because what had happened is when they went in and conquered Jericho they were forbidden

to take any of the loot. Now they call it booty in the scriptures. And they were forbidden to take that. It was under the ban. And anybody that transgressed, then that person was to put, be put to death. Well they determined that it was Achan who had seen those garments and he took them and he hid them. And consequently Achan died and so did the family. Now they were part of a tribe. All of this was determined by the lots. When you go to Proverbs, chapter 16, verse 33, Proverbs, chapter 16, verse 33 you see a very interesting statement that's very helpful. "The lot is cast into the lap, But...every decision is from the Lord."(Proverbs 16:33) In other words it's the Lord that determines the way the lots come out. In Proverbs, chapter 18:18: "The...lot puts an end to [contentions] And decides between the mighty...."(Proverbs 18:18) In other words you cast lots. When I was a kid we drew straws. Mother would take two toothpicks and break one off and we would choose the toothpick, and whoever got the longest one got the prize or got to do whatever. And that just settled the matter. Well this is a Biblical thing and this is what we're reading about right here. Now write down Jonah, chapter 1, verse 7, because in Jonah, chapter 1, verse 7. When the storm comes up that God sends, because Jonah is running away from the Lord, then the storm comes up and they're trying to find out who's causing this calamity because they know that calamity comes from God. So in Jonah, chapter 1, verse 7 it says, "...‘Come, [and] let us cast lots so we may learn on whose account this calamity has struck us.’ So they cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah."(Jonah 1:7b) Did the lot fall right? Yes, the lot fell on Jonah. And Jonah was the cause. Well there's one more that we have to look at, but I'm not going to touch it today, but it's in the New Testament. But I just want you to see beloved, the sovereignty of God. There is more to this story. It gets exciting. What is going to happen? Jonathan has been picked. Is he going to die? Saul has sworn he's going to die. What is going to happen? Will Jonathan live? Will Jonathan die? Tune in tomorrow at the same time and the same place and find out the fate of Jonathan.