Lesson 2: Saul’s Decline and the Selection of David (I Samuel 13-18)

**Review**

Last week, we saw how the children of Israel desired a king due to the dishonesty of Samuel’s sons and their desire to be like the nations around them. Such a desire was not a rejection of Samuel, but rather a rejection of God and of what set them apart as God’s special people. Nevertheless, God used the event to accomplish His will and deliver the people from the Philistines. The success of any king would depend upon their obedience to God’s commands. As a leader, Saul had the physical characteristics expected of a king, and he initially exhibited the traits of humility, discretion, and self-control. However, his real character would soon be revealed in his failure to fully obey God and in his envy of David’s success.

**Questions**

1. How did the children of Israel react to Jonathan’s attack on the Philistines, and what does it say about their decision to have a king (13:4-7; 8:19-20)?
2. What justification does Saul give for offering a sacrifice at Gilgal, and what was the result? What does this event say about the character of Saul (13:11-15)?
3. What is Jonathan’s motivation for attacking the Philistines, and what does it say about his character in contrast to his father? What sign does Jonathan use during the attack to determine God’s will (14:6-14)?
4. What rash order did Saul make during the battle with the Philistines and what was the result? How did it cause the people to sin? How does his event inform the character of Saul (14:24-46)?
5. Why did God command Saul to completely destroy the Amalekites? Why did Saul not do what God told him to do, and what was the result? What does this passage teach us about obedience (15:2-29)?
6. Why do you think Samuel believed Eliab was God’s choice to be the next king of Israel? What does God’s selection of David as king teach us about what God values in a man (16:6-13; 16:18)?
7. What qualities does David exhibit in his defeat of Goliath that validates his selection as the next king of Israel (17:20-58)?
8. How is the relationship between Jonathan and David described, and why is it significant given this moment in the United Kingdom (18:1-4; 13:14)?
9. What was the source of Saul’s distrust of David, and how did that distrust grow into paranoia? How does this moment in Saul’s life provide a contrast between his character and David’s character (18:5-16)?
10. How does Saul use his own daughters to try and entrap David? How do these events show the further decline of Saul’s character in contrast with David’s character (18:17-30)?

**Topics for thought, discussion, and application**

1. The danger of rash statements (I Samuel 14:24) – how can we keep ourselves from making rash statements?
2. Our attitude toward obedience (I Samuel 15:20-21) – why do you think “partial obedience” is so prevalent among religious people?
3. The measure of a man (I Samuel 16:7) – while living, people are generally described by external factors (status, wealth, physical/mental abilities), but in death, they are described by what kind of person they were – why do you think that is?
4. Linkage of courage to one’s faith in God (I Samuel 17:37) – what are some of the obstacles to courage in our lives?
5. Nature of jealousy and envy (I Samuel 18:8) – what are some of the warning signs that jealousy and envy are starting to take hold in our lives?