

Good morning, Moon Valley!

It is so good to be back from my summer break.

Let me preemptively answer some questions you may have.

Bob, did you go on vacation?

Not really. Not in the traditional sense. Cathy and I didn't travel anywhere. We stayed home.

So, you are saying it was a stay-cation?

Well, sort of. We did get some vacation-like rest. But mostly, I worked on church, home, and family initiatives that I don't have much time to do when I am preaching. We put a serious dent in our to-do list that had some items on it that had been in que for a long time.

So, you are saying it was awful?

Not at all. It may be the best break we've ever had. It was productive, gratifying, and restorative. In addition to finishing off some overdue projects, I read several books. And Cathy and I both enjoyed a season of extraordinary gratefulness to God for what he has done for us.

So, are you ready to get back to preaching?

Yes and I don't know. I love to preach. But coming back from a break, I am always a little worried that I won't be able to do it anymore. So, we'll see. I have been sitting on the bench for a while; I may have to preach my way back into shape.

Today we continue our sermon series titled, □ “Making a Difference in a Nation Adrift.” It is a study through the book of 1 Samuel. Our text for today is □ 1 Samuel chapter 13.

From this text, we are going to learn about wisdom. Specifically, the big idea is this: □ Trust not in the wisdom of the world, but in the wisdom of the Word. That is to say, we should not rely on what the world says is true and good; rather, we should rely on what God says. We dare not take as our ultimate authority human wisdom; instead, we must depend on the wisdom of the Lord.

To most of you listening, this is not a controversial idea. You probably agree. Indeed, the Bible is peppered with variations on this idea. For example, during my quiet time on Tuesday, I read □ 1 Corinthians 3:19, where the apostle Paul says,

NIV 1 Corinthians 3:19 For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God’s sight. . . .

□ Proverbs 3:5 also comes to mind, where it says,

ESV Proverbs 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.

There is an antithesis between the wisdom of the world, including our own human understanding of things versus the wisdom of the Word, including what the Lord has revealed to us in Scripture. Moment by moment, we decide which wisdom governs us, the world’s or God’s.

The big idea is: Trust not in the wisdom of the world, but in the wisdom of the Word.

Easy to say. Much harder to do. And a big part of the difficulty lies in the fact that the wisdom of the world and the wisdom of the Word can be easily confused if we are not careful. The devil is in the details. And the devil is a masterful deceiver.

I deliberately worded the big idea so that the □ “wisdom of the world” and the “wisdom of the Word” sound similar. The phrases differ by only one letter. This reflects the reality that the wisdom of the world can be rationalized to sound an awful lot like the wisdom of the Word. We can talk ourselves into adopting the world’s wisdom, making it sound like the godly choice. We can deceive ourselves by taking worldly wisdom and dressing it up with a religious veneer to make it look godly.

Our text in 1 Samuel 13 is a case in point.

You may recall from previous studies that the prophet Samuel has anointed Saul as the very first king of Israel.

□ 1 Samuel 13:1 says,

ESV 1 Samuel 13:1 Saul lived for one year and then became king, and when he had reigned for two years over Israel,

The rather awkward and confusing wording here reflects the difficulty translators have had in rendering this verse from the original Hebrew. It almost sounds like Saul was a one-year-old when he became king and he ruled for only two years. But we know from elsewhere in Scripture that this is not true.

To try to make sense of this, some translators have supplied what are believed to be some missing numbers. For example, the *New American Standard Bible* translates the very same verse □ this way:

NAU 1 Samuel 13:1 Saul was *thirty* years old when he began to reign, and he reigned *forty* two years over Israel.

The italicized words “thirty” and “forty” are not in the original Hebrew text, but are supplied by translators to fit what we know to be true from other scriptures.

This kind of interpretive quandary is rare in Scripture, but sometimes it’s hard to know what something means.

So, which translation is correct?

We can’t be sure. But it doesn’t really matter.

No point of doctrine is affected. And the consensus among scholars is that, no matter what the correct translation may be, Saul is king of Israel and he has reigned for two years at the beginning of our text.

Verse  2 goes on to say,

ESV 1 Samuel 13:2 Saul chose three thousand men of Israel. Two thousand were with Saul in Michmash and the hill country of Bethel, and a thousand were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin. The rest of the people he sent home, every man to his tent.

Here we see that Saul is mobilizing troops to fight against the Philistines, who had been long-standing enemies of Israel.

Let me provide some geographical context. Here is a  map of the middle east, showing Sea of Galilee to the north, the Dead Sea to the south and the Jordan River connecting them.

The territory of □ Israel at the time is roughly depicted by the shaded area in orange. The Philistines were primarily □ to the west, occupying the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Nevertheless, the militarily superior Philistines had infiltrated the land of Israel and stationed certain military garrisons.

The action in our text occurs in the small area depicted by □ the yellow box. The next slide shows this □ yellow-box area expanded, along with all the places mentioned in 1 Samuel 13. I want you to notice that this is not a very large area. All the action occurs within about a 10-mile radius.

According to verse 2, as shown on □ the map, Saul is leading two thousand men in the areas of Michmash and Bethel, while Jonathan, his son, leads a thousand men in the area of Gibeah, just south of Geba, where the Philistines have a garrison.

Jonathan with his thousand men come against the Philistines in Geba and defeat them. News of the victory spreads. Verses □ 3 and 4 explain.

ESV 1 Samuel 13:3 Jonathan defeated the garrison of the Philistines that was at Geba, and the Philistines heard of it. And Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, “Let the Hebrews hear.”

□ ESV 1 Samuel 13:4 And all Israel heard it said that Saul had defeated the garrison of the Philistines, and also that Israel had become a stench to the Philistines. And the people were called out to join Saul at Gilgal.

In defeating the garrison at Geba, the Israelites had poked the Philistine bear. Both sides now prepare for a bigger battle. Saul goes to Gilgal to mobilize his army. And the Philistines rally their troops in an overwhelming show of force. Verse □ 5 explains.

ESV 1 Samuel 13:5 And the Philistines mustered to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots and six thousand horsemen and troops like the sand on the seashore in multitude. They came up and encamped in Michmash, to the east of Beth-aven.

Remember, according to verse 2, the Israelite troops had numbered 3,000: 2,000 with Saul and 1,000 with Jonathan. They meet back in Gilgal to try to recruit more soldiers, but they are no match for the Philistines, who outnumber them many times over.

Fear spreads among the Israelites, leading to desertion, as revealed in verses □ 6 and 7.

ESV 1 Samuel 13:6 When the men of Israel saw that they were in trouble (for the people were hard pressed), the people hid themselves in caves and in holes and in rocks and in tombs and in cisterns,

□ ESV 1 Samuel 13:7 and some Hebrews crossed the fords of the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. Saul was still at Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling.

Geographically, here's the situation on □ the map. Tens of thousands of Philistines are mobilized at Michmash, just east of Beth-aven. Thousands of Israelites are to the east in Gilgal. Or at least they *were* in Gilgal. The Israel army is hemorrhaging soldiers. Many deserters are running away from Gilgal to hide in the countryside. Others cross the Jordan river and run to the lands of Gilead and Gad to the east, away from the Philistines.

Put yourself in Saul's sandals. As the king of Israel and the general of Israelite troops, how would you feel as you watch a vastly greater

Philistine army assemble against you while your own soldiers tremble, many of them running for their lives.

I want to temporarily skip ahead in our text to show you that this situation is even more dire than has been described so far. Verse 15 says,

ESV 1 Samuel 13:15 . . . The rest of the people went up after Saul to meet the army; they went up from Gilgal to Gibeah of Benjamin. And Saul numbered the people who were present with him, about six hundred men.

Here we see the extent of the desertion. Saul has moved from Gilgal to Gibeah. And he now has only about 600 men with him, down from 3,000 earlier. That is 600 Israelites against 30,000 Philistines in chariots, plus 6,000 Philistines on horseback, plus countless Philistines on foot.

This ain't lookin' good.

Pre-battle tactics unfold in ☐ verses 16 through 18.

ESV 1 Samuel 13:16 And Saul and Jonathan his son and the people who were present with them stayed in Geba of Benjamin, but the Philistines encamped in Michmash.

☐ ESV 1 Samuel 13:17 And raiders came out of the camp of the Philistines in three companies. One company turned toward Ophrah, to the land of Shual;

☐ ESV 1 Samuel 13:18 another company turned toward Beth-horon; and another company turned toward the border that looks down on the Valley of Zeboim toward the wilderness.

Here's the situation on □ the map. The Israelites are in Geba, less than two miles away from throngs of Philistines encamped in Michmash.

From their main encampment in Michmash, the Philistines send "raiders" or detachments to blockade the three main roads from the north leading down to Michmash from Beth-horon, from Ophrah in the land of Shual, and from the Valley of Zeboim. This deployment would have sealed off the Israelites in Geba, guarding against possible Israelite reinforcements from the north.<sup>1</sup>

The Israelites now have no hope of assistance.

Moreover, the Israelites are at a huge disadvantage in terms of weaponry. The Philistines were far more advanced in metallurgical technology, effectively giving them a monopoly on metal weapons, including swords and spears. The Philistines had historically been careful to guard their metals and metallurgical technology. As such, there were no blacksmiths in Israel at the time. The only metal instruments the Israelites had were agricultural tools, which had to be sharpened by Philistine professionals who charged exorbitant fees. This is explained in □ verses 19 through 22.

ESV 1 Samuel 13:19 Now there was no blacksmith to be found throughout all the land of Israel, for the Philistines said, "Lest the Hebrews make themselves swords or spears."

□ ESV 1 Samuel 13:20 But every one of the Israelites went down to the Philistines to sharpen his plowshare, his mattock, his axe, or his sickle,

---

<sup>1</sup> Bergen, *New American Commentary*, 1 & 2 Samuel, p. 154.



□ ESV 1 Samuel 13:21 and the charge was two-thirds of a shekel for the plowshares and for the mattocks, and a third of a shekel for sharpening the axes and for setting the goads.

□ ESV 1 Samuel 13:22 So on the day of the battle there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people with Saul and Jonathan, but Saul and Jonathan his son had them.

The upshot of this is that the Israelites are armed with relatively crude weapons made of wood and stone, while the Philistines have the latest and greatest metallic arsenal. Saul and Jonathan are the only Israelites with a metal sword and spear.

Moreover, the Philistines position yet another detachment of soldiers at the pass of Michmash, which is between Michmash and Geba. Verse □ 23 explains,

ESV 1 Samuel 13:23 And the garrison of the Philistines went out to the pass of Michmash.

The effect of this move would be to seal off any northward movement by the Israelites.

We are given painstaking military details to show that, from a human wisdom point of view, the situation for Saul and Israel is utterly hopeless. They have no chance against the Philistines. They are about to get creamed.

That brings us to the crucial part of the text we skipped, where Saul has to choose between the wisdom of the world and the wisdom of the Word. And this choice normally comes under duress.

We rewind to □ verse 8, where Saul and his men are still in Gilgal. It says,

ESV 1 Samuel 13:8 He [Saul] waited seven days, the time appointed by Samuel. But Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and the people were scattering from him.

The back story to this is that the prophet and priest Samuel, by the Spirit of God, had directed Saul to go to Gilgal and to wait seven days for him to arrive. Samuel promised that he would arrive at Gilgal within the seven-day period to offer burnt offerings and to sacrifice peace offerings to God. And then Samuel would reveal to Saul what God wanted him to do.

Some scholars tie this back to the instructions given to Saul by Samuel two years earlier, back in 1 Samuel 10:8. Others believe that Samuel had given essentially the same instructions to Saul more recently. Whatever the case, Saul has the instructions clearly in mind.

The wisdom of the Word was to wait for the full seven days, to wait for Samuel to arrive, to wait for Samuel to give the offerings that only he as priest should give, and to wait for God's instructions that would follow.

That was the wisdom of the Word: to wait.

But waiting seemed utterly foolish—foolish according to the wisdom of the world.

Every day Saul waited, he lost more men to desertion.

Every day he waited, he gave the Philistines more time to prepare and position their massively superior army.

Every day he waited, the murmuring about his indecisive leadership grew louder.

Every day he waited brought more fear, more sleeplessness, more doubt, more hopelessness.

Finally, on the seventh day, Saul is done waiting. Before the seventh day is fully completed, he takes matters into his own hands, forsaking the wisdom of the Word.

God does not seem to be coming through for Saul or the Israelites, so Saul figures he has to do what he can to save himself and his people. Verse □ 9 describes Saul's impatience.

ESV 1 Samuel 13:9 So Saul said, "Bring the burnt offering here to me, and the peace offerings." And he offered the burnt offering.

Saul rationalizes that what God really wants is the religious offerings. He presumes that religious ritual is the way to gain God's favor rather than to trust and obey his Word. Saul likely thinks to himself, "I must take it upon myself to give God the offerings he wants before it's too late for me and my people."

Saul's disobedience is multi-layered. He does not wait the full seven days as he was commanded. He goes against God's Word by offering sacrifices only a priest should give. And he dresses up his disobedience with religiosity, seeking God's favor, but in the wrong way.

Verses □ 10 and 11 continue,

ESV 1 Samuel 13:10 As soon as he had finished offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came. And Saul went out to meet him and greet him. 11 Samuel said, "What have you done?" . . .

Immediately, Saul knows he's in trouble and attempts to shirk responsibility by claiming he was forced to take action because of Samuel's delay and his desperate need for help. Verses □ 11 and 12 explain.

ESV 1 Samuel 13:11 . . . And Saul said, "When I saw that the people were scattering from me, and that **you** did not come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines had mustered at Michmash,"

□ ESV 1 Samuel 13:12 I said, 'Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the favor of the LORD.' So I forced myself, and offered the burnt offering."

But Samuel is not buying Saul's excuses for disobedience. Samuel had, in fact, arrived on time, just as he said he would. It was Saul who failed to trust in the wisdom of the Word.

In □ verses 13 through 15, Samuel passes his sobering judgment.

ESV 1 Samuel 13:13 And Samuel said to Saul, "You have done foolishly. You have not kept the command of the LORD your God, with which he commanded you. For then the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever."

□ ESV 1 Samuel 13:14 "But now your kingdom shall not continue. The LORD has sought out a man after his own heart, and the LORD has commanded him to be prince over his people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you."

□ ESV 1 Samuel 13:15 And Samuel arose and went up from Gilgal. . . .

You may be wondering, how could Samuel possibly say that Saul's kingship would have survived had he obeyed? Aren't Saul and the Israelites about to get creamed by the Philistines anyway?

Spoiler alert. Against all odds, the Lord himself saves Israel from the Philistines, who are roundly defeated in a way that no one could have anticipated. No one but God. More on that next Sunday.

Turns out the Lord didn't need Saul's help. Or anyone else's. The Lord is perfectly capable of fulfilling his perfect wisdom in his perfect timing, regardless of how impossible or dire things may seem to us.

The Lord simply wants Saul and us to trust and obey his Word.

This brings us back to the big idea: □ Trust not in the wisdom of the world, but in the wisdom of the Word.

None of us will face exactly what Saul faced. There are no Philistines in Phoenix.

But there are countless modern parallels. And they almost always boil down to a foolish pride that deludes us into thinking that our way is better than God's or that we need to help God take care of us. And the delusion normally comes under duress.

The wisdom of the world says your biological clock is ticking. Time is running out for you to get married and have kids. You better ignore God's selective wisdom in finding a spouse before it's too late.

The wisdom of the world says you define your own identity based on your own feelings. You better ignore God's outdated wisdom in determining who you really are or you may never be fulfilled.

The wisdom of the world says you are just too busy to carve out significant time alone with God for Bible intake and prayer. You can put that off for when you're not so busy. Otherwise, you'll be overloaded.

The wisdom of the world says you don't really need to be actively involved in a church to fulfill all God wants for your life. You can use church like an app. Just use it when you need it. Otherwise, you'll be unbalanced and burned out.

The wisdom of the world says love is a good thing as long as you're feeling it. But when you're not feeling it, it is best to move on. Otherwise, you won't be happy. And God just wants you to be happy.

And here's one that hits me right between the eyes.

The wisdom of the word says it all depends on you. Your success will be determined entirely by your talent, your discipline, and your strength. You are responsible for all the outcomes. You better keep doing more; otherwise, you will be a failure.

There is more of Saul in me than I would like to admit.

As part of my quiet times, I have been reading through a little devotional book titled, *A Year of Slowing Down* by Alan Fadling. Here's an entry on Day 66 that struck me.

What pleases the Lord is not what we accomplish in our own strength but our trusting, reverent orientation toward him. Awaiting God's gracious favor is different from attacking in our own strength to get what we want. In today's world, people too often do the latter. But it's a delightful thing to the heart of God when we humble ourselves and follow him as closely as we can. . . . I wonder if a prayer like this one might arise in your heart as you reflect on these

*things: Today, Lord, grant me a greater awareness of your work, rather than being so impressed, obsessed, or even overwhelmed by my own work. Help me to remember that my work is microscopic compared to yours. Cure me of empty pride and relieve me of the illusion that my yoke is heavier than it really is.<sup>2</sup>*

I suspect that Saul was under the illusion that his yoke was heavier than it really was. According to the wisdom of the world, he likely thought that he alone was responsible to save himself and his people from the Philistines. What an overwhelming burden!

But, in reality, his yoke was not that heavy. His yoke was to simply trust and obey the Lord in waiting the full seven days for Samuel, according to the wisdom of the Word.

The lesson from Saul is the lesson for us. Trust not in the wisdom of the world, but in the wisdom of the Word.

Let's pray. Lord, cure us of the foolish pride that deludes us into thinking our way is better than yours or that we need to help you take care of us. Help us to entrust our wellbeing to the wisdom of your Word, forsaking the empty wisdom of the world. Amen.

Before you go, I want to let you know about an important and practical way to help choose the wisdom of the Word.

On the Connect Counter in the lobby, grab a listing of all our plans for ministry for the next twelve months. It is also available on our website. Think of it as a menu of spiritual food that will nourish your soul and help you grow in the wisdom of the Word.

---

<sup>2</sup> Fadling, Alan. *A Year of Slowing Down* (p. 61). InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.

Let me highlight a few things coming up fast so you won't miss them. . .

.