

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

MONDAY

Saul foolishly commanded that his army should not eat. He probably did this to keep on the pursuit. The hungry army came upon a place where honey was literally dripping from the honeycombs, but they didn't eat. Saul's son, Jonathan, however, hadn't heard his father's order, and he ate some. When told about it after the fact, he expressed his opinion that it would have been better for the army to have eaten.

I Samuel 14:24-30

Saul's order was a foolish one because an army travels on its stomach. Everyone knew that! The army may have gained time but it lost strength. To forbid riotous drinking or gluttonous feasting would have been wise; to forbid eating was foolish! His own son said so. To put a curse on anyone who ate was not only foolish, it was prideful and arrogant. That was Saul. The temptation to exercise pride is always with us, but God looks for the heart that is humble before Him.

TUESDAY

Saul's army pursued the Philistines and defeated them. Then, they dove headfirst into the spoils of war - especially into the food! Because they had not been allowed to eat, they were so starving that they ignored Jewish Law as they killed, cooked, and ate the livestock. Saul rebuked them and they responded well and started following the Law.

I Samuel 14:31-34

When the restraints upon eating were finally removed after the battle, the people went crazy and ate without thought of propriety. There is a lesson here about humanity in general. And about our kids. And maybe about ourselves. The response to foolish and extreme restraint is often uncontrollable freedom. We do well to train kids in making choices rather than making every one for them. Then, when the day for personal freedom arrives, they will not run amuck in their new-found freedom. Sometimes the road to learning discretion is a bumpy one.

WEDNESDAY

Saul commanded the army to continue its pursuit of the enemy, bragging that not even one of the enemy will be left alive. The people responded by saying, "Do whatever seems good to you." A priest stepped forward and suggested that they ask the Lord for His counsel in this matter. They did, but on the first day, no answer came from God.

I Samuel 14:36-37

Saul shows a lot of zeal but little wisdom. His army had been deprived of food already; now he was going to deprive them of sleep. He's primarily concerned with winning the victory and looking good as the victor. But it is common for a man to think only of his own things (Saul would get the glory for the victory!) and not the things of others. The people are willing to obey, but only one priest speaks up with the idea everyone should have had: let's ask God. That's a good reason to have men of faith around us: they sometimes pick up the slack when we fall down. Do you have such a

network of believers around you? Why not start one?

THURSDAY

Saul was so anxious to pursue and defeat the Philistines that he had ordered his army not to stop to eat or sleep! Yet now he stopped, and directed all his attention to his son Jonathan's eating of the honey, and in doing so, allowed the Philistines to escape destruction. Saul cast lots and determined that Jonathan, in eating the honey, had disobeyed his command and therefore must die. The people argued strongly in Jonathan's defense, and in the end, rescued him from his father's anger.

I Samuel 14:38-46

In this passage, Saul is fighting the wrong enemy. As a result, the real enemy escapes to fight another day. Do we not also sometimes attack the wrong enemy? The enemy is not the cashier in the supermarket who is slow and chatty with the people in line ahead of me. The real enemy is the 'old man' within me urging me to demand my rights for faster service and thinking of a stinging rebuke I can fling her way. My enemy is the proud spirit within me. I need to recognize that and ask the Lord to be my strength as I fight against it, and then claim victory in Jesus' name.

FRIDAY

The author summarizes Saul's reign. He tells us whom Saul fought against, who his father and grandfather were, whom he married, who his kids were, who led his army, and so on. He tells us that he fought constantly, and that anytime he saw a valiant Israelite, he took him into his army.

I Samuel 14:47-52

Although Saul was victorious over some enemies, he ended up fighting against the Philistines "all the days of his life." Because these words come right after the passage telling us that he had the Philistines in his grasp but got sidetracked and failed to take advantage of the situation and defeat them, we are to see the connection. The result of his pride and arrogance was a lifetime of struggle. There is a price to pay for sin. We must bear the consequences that come. How much better to put away sinning! Let us strive this day to live as children of light!

SATURDAY

Samuel went to Saul, reminded him that God had made him to be King, and that, therefore, he should obey God. He told him what God had commanded him to do: to fight against and destroy the Amalekites and all they had. The Amalekites had attacked the Children of Israel back when they were in the wilderness headed towards the Promised Land, he explained. Saul counted his army, and moved against Amalek.

I Samuel 15:1-5

Divine justice may be meted out slowly, but it is a sure and certain thing. God often bears long with those who fight against Him. Here, God chose Saul to deliver justice. God always chooses the best instrument for the job at hand. I wonder what God has chosen for you to do today? It's probably not the slaughter of an enemy nation, but it might be to speak a word of comfort, or to lift a load from a friend.