

02/22/26 - Order of Worship

Red = Slide Change

Purple = Sound Person Note

Green = PC Person Note

Blue = Note for Speaker

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- **Welcome!**
- **Today's Sermon** - "When Fear Defines" - 1 Samuel 13–14
- **Church Newsletter**
- **Barb Beiler** — ***needs handheld mic***
- **Connect Cards** - place them in the offering boxes

PRAYER

NEW MEMBERS — ***see next page***

WORSHIP (3 Songs)

CONGREGATIONAL PRAYER

SCRIPTURE READING — **Greg Sollenberger** — **check livestream level**

MESSAGE

- **Reminder: Transition slides just before they're read, not after**

PRAYER

RESPONSE SONG

[New Members Slide]:

- Tyler & Addison Littler
- Troy & Deb Herr

Refton BIC Church Membership Covenant (2026)

[Membership 1 Slide] As a member of Refton Church, I accept the Bible as the Word of God which reveals the way of salvation and is the guide for faith and conduct.

I testify that I have personally experienced God's saving grace through Jesus Christ and that I desire to live a holy life that is fully devoted to Christ.

[Membership 2 Slide] I pledge that as a member of the Refton Church congregation, I will be dedicated to this church family, consent to biblical teaching, and support Refton services and ministries by regularly praying for, worshiping with, and giving financially to the mission of the church.

[Membership 3 Slide] I will use whatever gifts God has given me to participate in the ministry and mission of the church.

And with God's help, I will always seek to foster a spirit of Christian fellowship and unity within the Refton Church family.

[Blank Slide]

- **Tyler, Addison, Troy and Deb — Will you affirm this Refton Church Covenant for Membership by answering "I do"?**
- **Let's Pray**
- **Invite Worship Team Up**

MESSAGE - Part 13 - Seeking God's Kingdom - When Fear Defines - 2.22.26

This past Thursday, my family and I had the privilege of witnessing our friends adopt their little girl.

It was such a special moment for their family. But the road to adoption wasn't easy for them. It was *years* of praying and waiting.

I'm sure there were times they prayed, "*Lord... what's going on?*" But I also know they kept pressing on, trusting Jesus even when the future was unclear.

And I was thinking — maybe you've been in a similar situation?

If you have, then you know it's a hard place to be.

It's the place where our mind races.

We worry with questions like:

What am I going to do?

How am I going to fix this?

What's going to happen?

Even if we're going to the Lord in prayer, answers don't always come right away. And, honestly, the waiting can feel *unbearable*.

That's the moment we're going to talk about today—

It's the moment when fear defines the situation.

So when we find ourselves in these moments, what do we do?

I wanted to start off with James again. He encourages us to pray — asking God for His wisdom. But here's the thing — He also says:

[SLIDE 1] James 1:6 - But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.

So, when fear and uncertainty rises, we pray.

And when we pray, James says we must *believe and not doubt*.

That's *not* saying we're just supposed to believe that what we asked for will come true. James is saying that when we're faced with trials, trust the Lord. Rely on His wisdom — even if it takes patience on our part.

And that's exactly where Saul is in 1 Samuel 13.

[SLIDE 2] Breakdown of Chapters 10–12

If you remember:

In chapter 10, Saul's chosen as Israel's king.

In chapter 11, Israel is attacked — and the LORD rescues them.

Then Saul's reaffirmed as king.

But in chapter 12, Samuel warns everyone—including Saul—to serve the LORD with all their heart. Because if they don't, they would be destroyed.

[SLIDE 3] Chapter 13 slide

Now we come to chapter 13.

Some time has passed.

Saul has been king for a while.¹

And that passage of time is actually significant.

He's no longer the quiet guy from chapter 10 who hid behind the boxes.

He's grown into the role with the confidence of a king.

He's organized Israel's army.

He's gained the people's respect.

And in chapter 13, he handpicked three thousand men from Israel — two thousand under his command, and one thousand under the command of his son, Jonathan.

So at the beginning of chapter 13, it says that Jonathan's men attacked a small Philistine outpost — which was basically a small military base within Israel's border.

[SLIDE 4] MAP of the Region

And this is something I came to understand more clearly this week...

¹ Acts 13:21 says that Saul reigned for 42 years

Israel wasn't a fully established, national power yet. They were still mostly a nation of farmers and shepherds that were sandwiched between two nations stronger than them: the Ammonites to the east and the Philistines to the west.

The LORD defeated the Ammonites not that long ago, but the Philistines were an even bigger threat. They've been pressing past Israel's border for a while now, setting up military bases throughout Israel's land.

**So when Jonathan attacked one, this wasn't just a random battle...
This was Israel finally pushing back against Philistine control.**

And at first, it seemed to go well!

Saul then spread the word. The trumpet of war sounded across Israel, summoning the people to join him at Gilgal.

But then... the Philistines responded.

The Philistines were a real threat. Not only were they the dominant military force in the region, they also controlled the blacksmithing and metalworking industry — which meant they had a serious advantage in weapon technology.

In fact, the end of chapter 13 tells us that Israel even had to rely on them just to sharpen their farm tools!

And if that's not bad enough, verse 5 says when the Philistines assembled to fight Israel, their numbers were "as numerous as the sand on the seashore."²

Which might sound familiar...

Because God promised that exact thing about Israel.

But they weren't there yet.

Their numbers were *far* smaller.

So now what?

Look at verse 6...

[SLIDE 5] 1 Samuel 13:6 - When the Israelites saw that their situation was critical and that their army was hard pressed, they hid in caves and thickets, among the rocks, and in pits and cisterns.

² Genesis 15:5, 22:17, 32:12

Those of us with claustrophobia would *not* have done well in this situation. I've been in a few ancient cisterns in Israel — including this one.

Cisterns were used as a city's primary water source — and they weren't built out in the open... because if an enemy found it, that wouldn't be good! They wouldn't even have to fight you. They'd just cut off your water supply and wait.

However, if you needed a place to hide, this could be a good spot. Some of them are like this one — big enough for a tour group of 50 people to fit. But I can't imagine it would've been comfortable.

And it'd be pretty risky! Because there's usually only two entrances. And if the enemy found you hiding, it'd be game over. You're pretty much sitting ducks.

[SLIDE 6] MAP of the Region

So, at this point in 1 Samuel 13, most of Israel is either hiding or running away. But Saul and all the troops with him stayed in Gilgal. They knew they were supposed to wait for 7 days — which gave Samuel time to get there.

And while they were waiting, verse 7 says that Saul and his men were *trembling in fear*.

Watch what happens on the seventh day...

[SLIDE 7] 1 Samuel 13:8 - He waited seven days, the time set by Samuel; but Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and Saul's men began to scatter.

Because Samuel wasn't there yet, Saul's men started to abandon him.

Why were they waiting for Samuel?

Because Samuel was the LORD's prophet. The protocol here was to wait and hear from the LORD before the king could act. But day 7 was here and Samuel wasn't...

And the more men Saul lost, the more his fear grew.

In fact, by verse 9, the pressure was too much.

So Saul tried to get God on his side by offering a burnt sacrifice.

And just as he finished, Samuel showed up — *stunned*...

Samuel's like: *"What have you done?"*

He wasn't curious — he was appalled.

He knew exactly what Saul had done... and it was serious.

But Saul had his excuses ready.

Look at what he tells Samuel:

[SLIDE 8] 1 Samuel 13:11-12 - Saul replied, "When I saw that the men were scattering, and that you did not come at the set time, and that the Philistines were assembling at Michmash, I thought, 'Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the LORD's favor.' So I felt compelled to offer the burnt offering."

Notice who Saul blames:

"When I saw that the men were scattering..."

→ **It was the troops' fault.**

"And that you did not come at the set time..."

→ **It was Samuel's fault.**

"And that the Philistines were assembling..."

→ **It was the enemy's fault.**

And Saul doesn't say, "I sinned."

He says, "I felt **compelled**."

The Hebrew word there means *to act out of pressure*.

His fear built up — so he acted — and then he blamed.

But Samuel doesn't fall for the excuses.

He cut straight to the issue:

[SLIDE 9] 1 Samuel 13:13 - "You have done a foolish thing," Samuel said. "You have not kept the command the LORD your God gave you; if you had, he would have established your kingdom over Israel for all time."

Again, Saul knew better.

He should have trusted that Samuel was on his way with the Word of the LORD. But instead, he acted in fear.

And guys... let's hit the pause button here.

There's a really important thing I want you to see in the text.
This isn't just ancient history.

[SLIDE 10] This is the Genesis 3 pattern all over again...

In the Garden of Eden, God gave a clear command. Then the serpent distorted reality, fear crept in, pressure began to build, and trust began to waver. Instead of waiting on God's word, Adam and Eve acted. And when God confronted them, asking: *What have you done?*³ — that's when the blame game started.

Now look at Saul. He had a clear command: *Wait for the prophet*. But when the enemy gathered, fear crept in, and pressure began to build as Saul's troops scattered.

So instead of waiting for the Word of the LORD, Saul acted. And when Samuel arrived and asked: *What have you done?*⁴ — Saul blamed everyone else.

It's the same pattern...

[SLIDE 11] When fear overrides trust, we act without God's word, and we end up repeating the oldest story in the Bible.

And this shouldn't surprise us.

Last week we saw that from the Garden of Eden until now, the enemy's strategy with fear has been the same: distort reality, magnify the threat, and slowly erode our trust in God.

That's exactly what happened to Adam and Eve.
And it's what happened to Saul.

Saul gave into the enemy's Genesis 3 strategy.
His fear distorted reality — it magnified the threat,
and it eroded his trust in the LORD.

And that's why Samuel stood there — *stunned*.

That's the tragedy.

³ Genesis 3:13

⁴ 1 Samuel 13:11

I don't know if Saul fully understood what happened in that moment.
But when he gave in to fear, everything changed.
And Samuel made that very clear.
He said:

[SLIDE 12] 1 Samuel 13:14 - But now your kingdom will not endure; the LORD has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him ruler of his people, because you have not kept the LORD's command.

Saul thought his main problem was the Philistines.
They were stronger, better equipped, and their numbers were overwhelming.
Israel was in trouble.

But that wasn't the tragedy.

The real tragedy was that Saul didn't rely on the LORD when he needed to.
Instead of waiting for the Word of the LORD, he wavered in fear.

In the words of James... **Saul doubted.**⁵
He was like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.

But 1 Samuel 14 gives us a different picture.

Saul's son, Jonathan, shows what it's like to **ask... and believe.**

[SLIDE 13] Saul goes to Gibeah

The situation for Israel toward the end of chapter 13 isn't looking good.

Saul and his army left Gilgal and went into the mountains at Gibeah.
At least there they could hide and have the advantage of the high ground.

But as they're hiding, the Philistines were sending small raiding parties to Israelite towns. At this point, the Philistines were just toying with Israel.

And so at the beginning of chapter 14, Saul's son, Jonathan, had enough.
Without telling Saul, Jonathan and his armor bearer decided to go over to the Philistine outpost that was just across the ravine...

[SLIDE 14] Picture of the Ravine

⁵ James 1:6-8

This is the ravine in Israel where Jonathan and his friend decided to cross. Listen to how it's described...

1 Samuel 14:4-5 - On each side of the pass that Jonathan intended to cross to reach the Philistine outpost was a cliff; one was called Bozez and the other Seneh. One cliff stood to the north toward Michmash, the other to the south toward Geba.

**Okay, so you've just heard the plan.
Now we're looking at where he intended to cross.**

The cliffs are steep — in fact, verse 13 says they had to climb up using their *hands and feet*. Not only that, they're totally exposed. This wasn't a nighttime sneak attack — the Philistines saw them coming!

They said in verse 11, "Look! The Hebrews are crawling out of the holes they were hiding in." I imagine they were probably laughing among themselves as they shouted, "Come up to us and we'll teach you a lesson!"

**But Jonathan wasn't planning to just climb up and fight.
This is where he's different from his dad.**

Because when he first had the idea to go to the outpost, look at what he said to his armor-bearer. He said:

[SLIDE 15] 1 Samuel 14:6 - "Come, let's go over to the outpost of those uncircumcised men. Perhaps the LORD will act in our behalf. NOTHING CAN HINDER THE LORD FROM SAVING, whether by many or by few."

Despite overwhelming odds — **Jonathan remained confident in the LORD.**

This is what James was talking about when he said:
When you ask, you must believe and not doubt.

James was talking about an unwavering trust in the LORD.

When we trust in the LORD, fear can't throw us off balance. And James wasn't talking about trusting for a certain outcome—

He was saying:
Trust in the LORD's character and power.

*Trust that His faithfulness does not fail.
Trust that nothing can hinder Him from saving.*

That's the difference between Jonathan and Saul.
Jonathan **trusted** the LORD.
Saul **doubted**.

And so, before Jonathan climbed up to the Philistines, he said:

[SLIDE 16] 1 Samuel 14:9-10 - "If they say to us, 'Wait there until we come to you,' we will stay where we are and not go up to them. But if they say, 'Come up to us,' we will climb up, because that will be our sign that the LORD has given them into our hands."

Again, he's wanting to hear from the LORD before he acts.

So the Philistines say, "Come up to us..."

Jonathan and his buddy climb up.

And I imagine what happened next was like a scene from the Matrix...

[SLIDE 17] 1 Samuel 14:13b-14 - The Philistines fell before Jonathan, and his armor-bearer followed and killed behind him. In that first attack Jonathan and his armor-bearer killed some twenty men in an area of about half an acre.

Clearly, the odds were not in their favor:

They're outnumbered.

They don't have the element of surprise.

They're underequipped.

And yet...

Nothing can hinder the LORD from saving.

So they stepped out in faith.

And after the dust settled, they saw they defeated about 20 Philistines.

I imagine Jonathan and his armor-bearer were exhausted...

But as they looked at the Philistines that remained around them,
all they saw was panic...

[SLIDE 18] 1 Samuel 14:15-16 - Then panic struck the whole army—those in the camp and field, and those in the outposts and raiding parties—and the ground shook. It was a panic sent by God. Saul's lookouts at Gibeah in Benjamin saw the army melting away in all directions.

So, two men step out in faith, confident in the LORD—
And the LORD acts.
The impossible became possible.

And here's the key point:

[SLIDE 19] The issue was never numbers. The issue was trust.

And in Saul's case, **fear defined his trust.**

If Saul had trusted the LORD and waited for Samuel—
Things would have been very different.

And this is exactly what James was talking about.

[SLIDE 20] James 1:6 says "when you ask, you must believe and not doubt."

Saul asked... but he wavered.
Jonathan asked... and he trusted.

James says the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.

Saul was tossed by fear.
But Jonathan was anchored in trust.

**The circumstances were defined by fear and uncertainty.
But Jonathan's heart was not.**

And so what we're seeing today is that fear can define the situation.
But it doesn't have to define the heart.

There will be times when we face overwhelming circumstances.
But we're not left to face them alone.

We serve a God who acts.
And when we ask, we can be confident:

Nothing can hinder the LORD from saving.

That's not just something Jonathan believed—
That's something we see throughout the whole Bible.

In fact, Psalm 33:16 says:

[SLIDE 21] Psalm 33:16 - No king is saved by the size of his army; no warrior escapes by his great strength.

In other words:

All the strength in the world is nothing compared to the strength of the LORD.

It's not about numbers — it's about trust.

Are we really trusting the LORD?

Or are we wavering back and forth?

Are we willing to wait on the LORD's wisdom before we act?

Or are we trying to fix our problems ourselves?

Psalm 33 encourages us to wait in hope for the LORD...

[SLIDE 22] Psalm 33:20-22 - We wait in hope for the LORD; he is our help and our shield. In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name. May your unfailing love be with us, LORD, even as we put our hope in you.

May that be our posture in prayer when we feel the pressure of fear and doubt...

May we wait in hope for the LORD—
confident in His power, and His unfailing love.

Let's Pray