Lessons 67
SAUL'S FOOLISH VOW

Story Elements

- **Text**: 1 Samuel 13:15-14:46
- **Setting**: approx. 1050 B.C.
- **Main Characters**: God, Saul, and Jonathan
- **Plot**: Saul continues to act foolishly by making a rash vow that endangers his son's life.

- **Key word**(s): "he hath _____ with God" (14:45)
- **Climax**: *"And Saul said, Cast lots between me and Jonathan my son. And Jonathan was _____."* (14:42)

Background

1. (13:16-23) Saul had summoned the Hebrews to Gilgal to fight the Philistines in Michmash, but attrition and fear swept their ranks.
   a. Saul's men numbered only _____.
   b. To make matters worse, Israel had no _____, whereas the Philistines excelled in metal work. As a result, the Hebrews lacked weapons.

Jonathan Fights Valiantly (14:1-23)

2. (14:1-12) While Saul's 600 languished in fear, Jonathan, Saul's son, decided that doing something is better than doing nothing.
   a. He and his _____ cross the pass between the Hebrew and Philistine camp to attempt an attack on the Philistines.
   b. Jonathan determined God's will in a Gideon-like fashion: if the Philistine watchmen say "_____" then God has given them the victory; if the Philistines propose to come to them, then God has not guaranteed victory.
3. The Philistines spotted Jonathan and his armor bearer, and, assuming they were _____ (*cf* 14:21), they said "come up to us." Jonathan acted upon the sign, and attacked the garrison, killing about twenty men.
4. (14:13-16) Then the LORD sent an _____, which threw the Philistine ranks into self-destructive panic and confusion. (14:15, 20). Saul's 600 join the fray, and the Philistines retreated.

Saul Vows Foolishly(14:24-46)

5. (14:17-19) Meanwhile, back at the main Israelite camp, Saul was consulting with a priest when he noticed the Philistines army to fall into panic.

a. (14:20-22) The sight of the fleeing Philistines emboldened the Hebrews and even caused the _____ to turn on the Philistines hosts.

   b. (14:23) With Jonathan's brave initiative, the providential earthquake, and the Philistine panic, "the _____ saved Israel that day."

6. (14:24-32) Saul commanded the Hebrews to pursue and plunder the retreating Philistines and bound them to a mandatory fast until the job was finished.

   a. Jonathan had not heard that Saul had issued a mandatory fast, so when Jonathan found _____ in the woods, he ate it. But his fellow soldiers warned him that his father pronounced a curse.

   b. Jonathan recognized his father's mandate for what it was: "My father hath _____ the land."

   c. But the Hebrews were already famished, and they began to eat the captured animals _____. (14:32)

7. (14:36-39) Though Israel had won the day, Saul's leadership was rapidly unraveling. When the LORD's guidance was not readily apparent, he assumed it was because someone had broken the fast. The Urim and Thummim were consulted to find the culprit. Saul made a second foolish vow: the guilty party would be _____, even if it was his own son Jonathan.

8. (14:40-44) Of course, the lot fell to Jonathan. Why did the LORD allow the Urim and the Thummim to take Jonathan? _____

Application

9. Jonathan trusted God to win the battle. Putting his faith in God's power, he said, *"Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the LORD will **work** for us: for there is no restraint to the LORD to save by many or by few." (14:6).* The people demanded his life be spared because they saw how he had "**wrought** with God." God works with those who believe God _____.

_____
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Answer Key

Key word(s): "taken" • 1. a) 600; b) blacksmith • 2. a) armorbearer; b) come up • 3. deserters • 4. earthquake • 5. a) deserters; b) LORD • 6. a) honey; b. troubled; c. raw • 7. executed • 8. to reveal to Saul his foolishness • 9. works