

I SAMUEL

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to I Samuel chapter 14 as we continue our study through the Word of God. If you remember from our last study Jonathan attacked the Philistines and when his father king Saul heard what was going on, he blew the trumpet and the people thought Saul was leading the charge against the Philistines. And as the Philistines saw what was happening, they mobilized their forces to come against Israel in the area of Michmash. When the children of Israel saw they were outnumbered and outgunned you might say, they hid in caves, fled to the other side of the Jordan River, some even joined the Philistines, while their leader, king Saul was also trembling in fear of the enemy.

As we move into chapter 14 this evening, we will see this story continue on as the Philistines are prepared to attack Israel. And we see that Israel is in fear, except for one man, Jonathan! Thus, with that said, let's begin reading in I Samuel chapter 14, starting in verse 1 and see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word!

I SAMUEL 14**VERSES 1-2**

1. As we have seen, Jonathan is a man of faith and his father, king Saul was a man who had no faith and where there is no faith there is no hope! Saul knows that he is far outnumbered in this battle, and as I have said, outgunned. He is totally unsure what to do even though the enemy is preparing to do battle with the children of Israel. On the other hand, his son Jonathan is ready to move, to go after the enemy. How could Jonathan do that? Because he believed in the promises of God, he was a man of faith and thus, nothing was beyond the capabilities of God.

2. May we have that kind of faith, a faith that has legs, a faith that is willing to walk! We are told in II Chronicles 16:9, **“For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him. . . .”** And Meyer expounds on this as he wrote, “God is ever on the outlook for believing souls, who will receive his power and grace on the one hand, and transmit them on the other. He chooses them, that by them he should make his mighty power known.” May we be open and available to the Lord so that He might use us for His glory!

3. Why did Jonathan not tell his father what he was doing? Maybe it was Saul’s lack of faith and if Jonathan told him what he was going to do, Saul would have stopped him!

VERSE 3

1. As you read this verse you may be wondering what this is about, why it is here. The reason may be as simple as this. Samuel was not ministering to Saul any longer and thus, Saul consults another priest to intercede before God for him. And he goes to Ahijah, who was a descendant of Eli, from which God pronounced judgment upon. Also, it shows the spiritual condition of Saul as we see Ichabod mentioned, which means, “the glory has departed.” I think the Holy Spirit places that in there to show us where Saul was!

2. One more point here and that is the fact that Jonathan did not do this for the glory, for the honor, he was doing it for the Lord. How do I know that? Because he told no one what he was doing, the people did not know that he was even gone. If he wanted the glory, he would have told someone. For us, can we serve the Lord, not for our glory but to bring glory to God and edify the body of Christ? That should be our heart’s motivation in service!

VERSES 4-5

1. As Jonathan and his armor bearer travel to the Philistine garrison, they come to these two-jagged rocks on either side of this narrow pass. This was a great military outpost in that you could place a few men in these mountains and they would be able to take down a bigger enemy as they could shoot down upon them. Also, if anyone tried to climb up this mountain, they would be easy prey. This is where the Philistines placed some of their men, to pick off the Israelites as they came to fight against them.

2. Now here's the thing. If Jonathan never went up to fight against the Philistines he would have never uncovered this strategic outpost. But, because he was walking in faith, God opened his eyes to this area and to take it out would protect any of the Israeli army that might come through there to get to the Philistine garrison.

3. Now one of these sharp rocks was called Bozez, which means, "glistening" or "shinning." The other was called Seneh, which means, "thorny." Why is that even important to us? Because, if we are willing to go forward, to walk by faith, to take a stand against the enemies, there will be glistening or shinning rewards for the kingdom of God. But also, in saying that, we must remember that there will be thorny challenges or difficulties we will face, but don't let that discourage you, God is on your side! I like what the great missionary from the past, William Carey said, "Attempt great things for God and expect great things from God." I can't agree more!

VERSE 6

1. Look at the faith of Jonathan. He isn't wondering "if" God can bring about this victory with just a few, but "will" He do it? Could God really defeat the enemy with only two people? Does He even need two? Of course not but God will work through His people to bring about a great victory and then He will get the glory for it will be the Lord who saved and not man. Man was just the instrument that God used and that is an important point for us to remember!

2. Jonathan said, **“For nothing restrains the LORD from saving by many or by few.”**

He believed that, what about you? Is this just some kind of theological truth that you believe but when it comes to the application, you are not sure? God wants you to be sure, you see, He is God! Remember in Matthew 13:58 as the people of Nazareth did not believe in what Jesus was doing and out of that we are told, **“Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.”** It was not that God’s power was lacking, but God will many times work in partnership with us and if we refuse, then He will not work. For Jonathan, he was a man of faith and he partnered with God for this work, trusting that in what God has promised He is more than able to bring to pass. How about you?

It is as Meyer tells us, “He had the smallest possible faith in himself, and the greatest faith in God. His soul waited for the Lord; in Him was centered all his hope, and from his gracious help he expected great things. All he aspired to was to be a humble vehicle through which the delivering grace of God might work.” Don’t make your God too small! You see, we fail many times by limiting God in what He can do. Or we come into situations like spiritual Rambo’s ready to blow everyone away, a kind of reckless faith. I think a better way to look at situations is to seek if God really wants that done, or is it just our own desire. That is what Jonathan was seeking, the will of God in this situation. Not “if” God can do it, but “will” God do it. Is that His will for this situation!

VERSE 7

1. When his armor bearer said that he too would go, that must have encouraged Jonathan greatly. We need those who come alongside us in the work and we need the Jonathan's to partner with in the work. Thus, whoever you are, you need to walk by faith, to be that encourager in the work or that leader that others will follow!

VERSES 8-10

1. Don't see this as an act of unbelief on Jonathan's part. He is just seeking the will of God; he does not doubt what God is telling him. He wants to make sure that his heart is right, that he is not just letting his emotions guide him but the Lord! That is just wisdom and humility!

2. Jonathan is ready to take that step of faith. If God is in it, he is ready to go. If you never take those steps of faith, you will never grow. A great example of this is Peter, as the Lord called him to step out of the boat and walk on the water, what did Peter do? Peter took that step of faith and walked on the water for a time, while all the others just stood by and watched. And even in Peter's weakness, the Lord was there to lift him up. But he did take that step of faith, and as we do, we experience great joy in seeing what God can and will do through us.

3. And I want you to notice that Jonathan does not have the whole battle plan here. He trusts that God knows what He is doing and will lead him one step at a time. That truly is faith folk's, letting God know the plan and our part is to walk! It is as this story illustrates for us:

When a traveler in the early days of the west, came to the Mississippi, he discovered there was no bridge. Fortunately it was winter and the great river was sheeted over with ice. But the traveler was afraid to trust himself to it, not knowing how thick it was. Finally with infinite caution, he crept on his hands and knees and managed to get halfway over. And then he heard--yes he heard singing from behind. Cautiously he turned, and there, out of the dusk, came another traveler, driving a four-horse load of coal over the ice, singing as he went!

- Source Unknown

I don't know about you, but I want my faith in the Lord to be the kind of faith that causes me to go out with joy instead of fearful that the situation I am in might fail, it might not work out. Folk's, even if it doesn't, like Peter the Lord will pick us up. The problem for many is that they are afraid to get out of the boat!

VERSES 11-12

1. Can you imagine the excitement Jonathan had when he heard the Philistines say, **“Come up to us, and we will show you something”**? And when he heard them say that he did not hesitate, he did not wonder if this was really of God, he stepped out in faith and encouraged his armor bearer by saying, **“Come up after me, for the Lord has delivered them into the hand of Israel.”** In other words, in Jonathan’s mind, the battle was already won, God had given them the victory and they only needed to step out in faith and fight! Imagine, God already defeated these Philistines before the swords of Jonathan and his armor bearer were even drawn! That is faith in action!

2. Now why did these Philistines summon Jonathan and his armor bearer to come up to them? It is possible that they felt secure and if they were foolish enough to try and climb up this mountain, they would end up dead. Or, it could be that they thought Jonathan and his armor bearer were turncoats, that they were surrendering to the Philistines as many others had already done, but of course that was not the case. And the reality is, God ordained this plan and now it was coming to pass!

VERSES 13-14

1. Notice what they did to get to the Philistines. They had to climb on their hands and knees up this steep mountain, with the Philistines ready to shoot at them. Are you willing to do that for God or are you willing to do battle when it is easy, when it does not cost you anything, when you don't have to get dirty you might say? If we only want to be used by God when it is easy, we won't see many victories in our life. But if we are willing to serve Him no matter what, God will give to us great victories in our life, in the battles we face, like He was about to do with Jonathan!

2. And look at how the enemy fell, at the hands of Jonathan and his armor bearer. It would have been very easy for them to say, "Let's just put our swords down and pray" but they did not do that, they engaged the enemy as God called them to do and the enemy fell, not by the hands of Jonathan and his armor bearer, but by the Lord. They were just the instruments that God was using in this battle and the same is true in our lives. Thus, as instruments in the hands of God, let us not argue or ignore what He wants to do, but let us be used by Him for His glory and see that salvation He will bring to the situations we face!

VERSE 15

1. Notice what transpired here. Jonathan and his armor bearer did their part and now God is doing His! They took those steps of faith and God causes the earth to tremble and great fear to come upon the Philistines who were in the mountains and the garrison of soldiers. Think about what is going on here. As they wake up and hear all this noise, they determine that the Israelites are upon them and it brings about great confusion and according to verse 20 the Philistines started killing each other. That is one way to decrease the numbers of the enemy! You see, the same is true in our own lives. We are to do what God has called us to do and what we can't do, He then will do as He did here!

2. How come we don't see this earthquake terrify Jonathan and his armor bearer?

Because Jonathan knew the God who made the earth tremble and instead of bringing them fear, it brought them great encouragement and confidence that God is the One who brought about this victory!

VERSES 16-19

1. As the watchman of Israel is keeping an eye on the army of the Philistines, he can't believe his eyes. We are told that as he was watching them their numbers began to melt away or decrease. They were vanishing before his eyes! And as word gets to Saul regarding this, what does he do? He calls for a roll call to see who is leading this battle against the Philistines. You have to be kidding me? The enemy is in confusion, they are melting away and instead of rising up and defeating them, he wants a roll call! Why was this so important to king Saul? Maybe he wanted to know who was going to get the credit for this battle. You see, with his ego he wanted the credit but at this point, he was not getting it!

2. Next, he calls for the Ark to be brought into the camp but did he need the Ark to be brought in to decide what to do? Absolutely not, but again, Saul is just as confused in what to do as the Philistine army was! And as the noise from the camp of the Philistines continues to grow, Saul can't wait any longer and he tells the priest, "**Withdraw your hand.**" What is that about? I don't think he is telling the priest to get lost but to stop seeking and get the answer from God with the Urim and Thummin! Saul was impatient, he was not a man of faith, he was a man of confusion, indecision and he responded in the flesh. And folk's, without God leading a persons life there will be nothing but confusion, indecision because apart from God man's wisdom is just plain foolishness!

3. Saul truly had dead faith as this story illustrates for us. We are told:

“It is that kind of faith which would lead a man to take a bottle of medicine from his medicine cabinet. Looking at the instructions on it, he says, ‘I’m sure they’re correct. I have all confidence in the source of the medicine. I know who wrote these directions. I believe everything about it. I know this will relieve my headache, if I just take it.’ But he takes the medicine bottle and puts it back on the shelf. He doesn’t lose his headache. It continues on. Yet he can say I believe that medicine. I believe all about that medicine. But still he won’t take it. That’s dead faith.”

- Dr. Harlan Roper, Tape on James, Dallas, Texas

May our faith be one that is exercised, that is seen in action. You see, it is not that we just believe these things of God but we apply them to our lives. We live what we say we believe and as I have said, may our faith have legs and walk!

VERSES 20-23

1. So Saul and his men join in this battle and as they get there they see the enemy fighting each other, which is always good for the opposing side, and God gives Israel a great victory that day. In fact, Josephus tells us that there was about 6,000 Philistines killed in this battle. And notice that those who had jumped to the side of the Philistines from the Jews jump ship again and rejoin their brethren. All those that were hiding out in fear returned. Why? Well, it was not because of the faith of Saul, but the faith of Jonathan that spurred the nation to fight. He was the spark that drew the nation together. They saw the faith of Jonathan put into action and it caused them to respond. Sadly, there will always be those Christians who hide themselves until the victory is assured and then they are drawn back into action. Which group of people are you most like?

2. Folk's, the God who gave Israel this great victory is still at work today. If you doubt that, listen to this true story of Major Vivian Gilbert, who was a British Army Officer.

We are told:

In the First World War a brigade major in Allenby's army in Palestine was on one occasion searching his Bible with the light of a candle, looking for a certain name. His brigade had received orders to take a village that stood on a rocky prominence on the other side of a deep valley. It was called Michmash and the name seemed somehow familiar. Eventually he found it in 1 Samuel 13 and read there: "And Saul, and Jonathan his son, and the people that were present with them, abode in Gibeah of Benjamin but the Philistines encamped in Michmash."

It then went on to tell how Jonathan and his armour-bearer crossed over during the night “to the Philistines’ garrison” on the other side, and how they passed two sharp rocks: “there was a sharp rock on the one side, and a sharp rock on the other side: and the name of the one was Bozez and the name of the other Seneh.” They clambered up the cliff and overpowered the garrison, “within as it were a half acre of land, which a yoke of oxen might plough.” The main body of the enemy awakened by the melee thought they were surrounded by Saul’s troops and “melted away and they went on beating down one another.” Thereupon Saul attacked with his whole force and beat the enemy. “So the Lord saved Israel that day.”

The brigade major reflected that there must still be this narrow passage through the rocks, between two spurs, and at the end of it the “half-acre of land.” He woke the commander and there read the passage through together once more. Patrols were sent out. They found the pass, which was thinly held by the Turks, and which led past two jagged rocks - obviously Bozez and Seneh. Up on top, beside Michmash, they could see by the light of the moon a small flat field. The brigadier altered his plan of attack. Instead of deploying the whole brigade he sent one company through the pass under cover of darkness. The few Turks whom they met were overpowered without a sound, the cliffs were scaled, and shortly before daybreak the company had taken up a position on “the half acre of land.”

The Turks woke up and took to their heels in disorder since they thought they were being surrounded by Allenby's army. They were all killed or taken prisoner. And so, after thousands of years British troops successfully copied the tactics of Saul and Jonathan.

- Keller, The Bible As History, pp. 179-180

You see, He is still working today. The bigger question is, "Do we believe that God is working and that He can use people like you and me just as He used the people of the Bible?" You bet He can as we have seen. Paul reminds us in Romans 15:4, "**For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.**" Or as The Amplified Bible puts it, "**For whatever was thus written in former days was written for our instruction, that by [our steadfast and patient] endurance and the encouragement [drawn] from the Scriptures we might hold fast to and cherish hope.**" In other words, may we trust God's Word, the examples that He has given to us in the Bible and walk by faith and not by sight? He wants us to!

VERSE 24

1. How often we see foolish vows made in the Bible and this is just another one.

Jonathan took a stand against the enemy, and he struck them with a mighty blow. But now it was time for the rest of the army of Israel to come together and defeat this fleeing army of the Philistines. But Saul makes this foolish vow that nobody could eat until the battle is over. You have to be kidding me? A soldier needs to eat to keep up his strength; it was not a time to fast!

2. I know, maybe you are thinking I am too harsh on this. Fasting is good. I can't argue that point but the reason I say what king Saul did was wrong is because the reason he was doing this or imposing this upon his army. Notice what he says, "**Cursed is the man who eats any food until evening, before I have taken vengeance on my enemies.**" Do you see the focus; it is about Saul and his vengeance upon his enemies. In other words, this oath and battle was not for the glory of God but for the glory of Saul. Folk's, that is obviously wrong in so many ways! Notice what Jonathan's focus was in this battle, "**Come, let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised; it may be that the Lord will work for us. For nothing restrains the Lord from saving by many or by few. . . . Come up after me, for the Lord has delivered them into the hand of Israel.**" I Samuel 14:6, 12. You see, his focus was the Lord while Saul's was himself!

3. And notice what it did to the morale of his soldiers, they were in distress, why?

Because they had no food and they were fighting against their enemy. They were weak; they were distressed when they should have been on a spiritual high seeing the salvation that the Lord had brought them against their enemy, the Philistines who had been oppressing them for years!

VERSES 25-30

1. Here we see two groups of people. First of all there is Jonathan. And as Jonathan is fighting against the enemy he sees some honey on the ground. Obviously honey is a quick energy boost and there it is ready for the taking and Jonathan partakes of it and he is refreshed, he is energized for this battle. In regards to this honey being on the ground, Clarke tells us, "There were many wild bees in that country, and Judea is expressly said to be a land flowing with milk and honey." Now I truly believe this was a God provision for them and only Jonathan partook of it. You see, you do need the energy; the strength to fight against the enemy and God was providing it. In regards to this battle in pursuing the enemy, Baldwin writes, "The mopping-up operations after a rout were all-important if the maximum benefit from the victory was to be reaped, but pursuit of the enemy involved an exhausting, unremitting journey over steep hills for hours on end."

But the people, the other soldiers saw it and did not partake of it because of the oath that their king, Saul had made and they were fearful of disobeying his commands. Can you imagine, exhausted, no energy and the battle is going on and there right in front of your eyes you see this honey dripping and yet, you can't partake of it. How discouraged these men must have been especially when they see the countenance of Jonathan brighten after eating the honey!

2. Now they tell Jonathan about this oath and Jonathan basically tells them it was a foolish thing to do and it was. In fact, listen again to the words of Jonathan, **“My father has troubled the land. Look now, how my countenance has brightened because I tasted a little of this honey. How much better if the people had eaten freely today of the spoil of their enemies which they found! For now would there not have been a much greater slaughter among the Philistines?”** You see, without food Jonathan realized that the enemy would not be wiped out!

3. Now how does that apply to us today? Let's read on and then I will show you how we can apply this to our lives today.

VERSES 31-35

1. As you read this it is hard to imagine that they would resort to this kind of activity but keep in mind that are starving, they are so hungry and they go on this feeding frenzy you might say and they kill these animals and eat the meat with the blood still in it, which was not kosher! In Deuteronomy 12:23-25 we see the children of Israel instructed regarding this issue of the blood being drained out of the animal before they ate the meat. We are told, **“Only be sure that you do not eat the blood, for the blood is the life; you may not eat the life with the meat. You shall not eat it; you shall pour it on the earth like water. You shall not eat it, that it may go well with you and your children after you, when you do what is right in the sight of the Lord.”**

You see, Saul’s foolish command led them to break the commands of God. Man’s laws, man’s laws will do that! In Mark 7:8-9 we see Jesus say, **“For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men — the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do.’ He said to them, ‘All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition.’”** In a sense, that was what was going on here with the children of Israel with this vow of Saul. Now this does not excuse the sin of the people, but sadly we see Saul blame them instead of being responsible for his foolish vow!

2. Now how does all this relate to us? If you don't partake of the meat of the Word, then you will end up eating the unclean meat of this world! Those are the only two options. In Psalm 119:103 we are told, "**How sweet are Your words to my taste, Sweeter than honey to my mouth!**" You see, God's Word is nourishing to us, it is refreshing, it is sweet to our lives and thus, if we don't feed upon it daily, then we will begin to spiritually starve ourselves and before long, we will take in the unclean meat of this world! And as you do that, what you take in will be what flows from your life! And sadly, how many church leaders are acting like Saul in that they are not feeding their people a diet that is rich in the Word of God, but are starving them to death. And, like I have said, they end up feeding upon the unclean meat of this world!

VERSES 36-39

1. Saul wanted to see if they should continue to pursue the Philistines, and he inquires of the Lord through the priest, Ahijah. But God did not answer Saul, which I believe was speaking of judgment, and Saul recognized that fact. And he came to the conclusion that someone in the camp has sinned and broke the oath, which he made. That is interesting, he knew there was sin in the camp the only problem here was that it was his sin in the camp that silenced the voice of God!

2. Now everyone knew it was Jonathan that had eaten that day except for Saul and yet, the people know Jonathan and his faith and thus, they just kept silent or as we are told, "**But not a man among all the people answered him.**"

VERSES 40-44

1. Again Saul makes this foolish vow that anyone who has transgressed his previous vow will be put to death and now the lot falls to Jonathan. And it would seem that they used the Urim and Thummin to cast these lots and discern who transgressed Saul's vow. Now why did God allow this? He is just answering the question of Saul and not casting any sin upon Jonathan. In fact, Clarke makes these remarks regarding this, "The holy oracle told the truth, but neither that oracle nor the God who gave it fixed any blame upon Jonathan, and his own conscience acquits him. He seeks not pardon from God, because he is conscious he had not transgressed."

2. And think about this. Saul was willing to put his own son to death rather than admit that he was the one who was at fault. That kind of pride will bring a person down as it is bringing Saul down! Now why was Saul so upset with Jonathan? Did Jonathan break God's Law? No, not at all. The only law he broke was his father's oath. That is why Saul was so upset. Saul was power hungry and he is seeing that power slowly eroding away.

3. We too can get so upset when others break our rules. We think Christians should look and act just like we do, like little Christian robots. And when they violate our laws, we get mad. Let's be careful, the only law that counts is God's!

VERSES 45-46

1. The people wanted a king like the other nations and now that they have one, they are going against his commands and at least here it is good. They recognize that this victory did not come by the strength of king Saul but by God who was working through Jonathan and they refuse to put him to death! You see, the idea here is that Jonathan was working for the Lord in this battle and not against Him. And in reality, Saul was the one who was not working for the Lord but against the Lord, but he did not see it that way!

2. Notice how verse 46 summarizes things for us. It reads, “**Then Saul returned from pursuing the Philistines, and the Philistines went to their own place.**” The implication here is that if it weren’t for the foolish oath or vow of Saul, they would have defeated the Philistines even more, but now both parties return home, the battle is over but not won the way that God wanted it!

VERSES 47-52

1. Do you see what is missing in these verses? We read about all that Saul was doing, his strength, the battles that he has won but there is nothing about the Lord and thus, he may have had some victories but **“Now there was fierce war with the Philistines all the days of Saul.”** You will never have the victories apart from the Lord and yet, for Saul, he surrounded himself with valiant men and I think the reason is simple. He looked for strong men who could protect him from anyone coming on the scene and taking his kingdom away from him. But the Lord has already said it will be taken away and there is nothing that will stop that from happening. He walked away from the Lord and now the Lord is leaving him on his own and that is never a good thing!

2. As I close this evening, let me leave you with these words from J. Vernon McGee that will help close out this chapter and set us up for what is ahead. He wrote in his commentary on I Samuel:

We are now seeing the true character of Saul. Later on we will see how he will act in direct disobedience to God. He is going to do something that will bring tragedy to the nation Israel. Had not God intervened, it would have meant the extermination of the nation. Saul is revealing that he is not God’s man at all. He is actually Satan’s man. We will see in the next chapter that Saul is not obeying God any longer—he is following his own devices.

Finally the Spirit of God will no longer speak to him. God will no longer give him leading, and he will turn from God to the demonic world. Then we will study that remarkable incident when Saul actually consults the witch of En-dor. It is a section with a great lesson for us in these days in which we are seeing the manifestation of demonism, the occult, the worship of Satan, and astrology. God help America today because there are many Saul' abroad!

- J. Vernon McGee, Thru The Bible, p. 150