

The Book of 1Samuel—14:1-23

“A Venture in Faith”

Introduction

In our last study in 1Samuel we saw how the Philistines had come out to battle against Israel—

1 Samuel 13:5-7 (NKJV)

⁵ Then the Philistines gathered together to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots and six thousand horsemen, and people as the sand which *is* on the seashore in multitude...⁶ When the men of Israel saw that they were in danger (for the people were distressed), then the people hid in caves, in thickets, in rocks, in holes, and in pits. ⁷ And *some of* the Hebrews crossed over the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. As for Saul, he *was* still in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling.

This was a real low point in Israel’s history—God’s people cowering before the enemy—running and hiding like little children.

I think the main reason they acted this way was because Saul, as their leader, didn’t inspire them to victory—he didn’t have a strong relationship with God, he wasn’t a man of deep faith.

Desperate times call for call for men and women of deep faith—

And that brings us to one of my favorite stories in the Bible—a story I’m calling “*A Venture in Faith.*”

I. The Scene—v.1-5

1 Samuel 14:1-5 (NKJV)

¹ Now it happened one day that Jonathan the son of Saul said to the young man who bore his armor, "Come, let us go over to the Philistines' garrison that *is* on the other side." But he did not tell his father. ² And Saul was sitting in the outskirts of Gibeah under a pomegranate tree which *is* in Migron. The people who *were* with him *were* about six hundred men. ³ Ahijah the son of Ahitub, Ichabod's brother, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eli, the LORD'S priest in Shiloh, was wearing an ephod. But the people did not know that Jonathan had gone. ⁴ Between the passes, by which Jonathan sought to go over to the Philistines' garrison, *there was* a sharp rock on one side and a sharp rock on the other side. And the name of one *was* Bozez, and the name of the other Seneh ⁵ The front of one faced northward opposite Michmash, and the other southward opposite Gibeah.

Here we see King Saul, an inept leader, who is paralyzed by his circumstance sitting under a pomegranate tree doing nothing while the enemy continued to increase in strength.

His men are terrified; many have deserted and are hiding in caves, pits, holes and in the mountains while Saul just sits there—a useless, clueless excuse for a leader.

Meanwhile fifteen miles away in Gibeah was Saul's son Jonathan.

Jonathan, unlike his father, was a man of faith—he was a strong believer in the God of Israel.

And as a man of faith he looked at the situation through the eyes of faith and not through the eyes of flesh—like a young shepherd boy named David did with a giant named Goliath.

And so Jonathan being a man of faith looked at this seeming impossible situation through the eyes of faith and it led him to make a bold proposal to his armorbearer—

II. The Proposal—v.6

1 Samuel 14:6 (NKJV)

⁶ Then Jonathan said to the young man who bore his armor, "Come, let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised; it may be that the LORD will work for us..."

Jonathan proposes a venture in faith—*"let's step out in this situation and see if God will do something incredible, something miraculous—why just sit here doing nothing, let's see if God wants to do a work!"*

I love Jonathan's heart, I love his adventurous spirit that was willing to trust God and step out in faith—unlike his father who was paralyzed by fear into inaction.

Jonathan made a bold proposal but notice (and this is very important)—his bold proposal was rooted in **a basic principle**—

"For nothing restrains the LORD from saving by many or by few"—v.6b

Or as the NLT puts it, *"He can win a battle whether he has many warriors or only a few!"*

Many years later King Asa was vastly outnumbered by a very powerful enemy that came against him (paraphrase from 2Chronicles 14)—

2 Chronicles 14:11 (NKJV)

¹¹ And Asa cried out to the LORD his God, and said, "LORD, *it is* nothing for You to help, whether with many or with those who have no power; help us, O LORD our God, for we rest on You, and in Your name we go against this multitude. O LORD, You *are* our God; do not let man prevail against You!" (Finish)

When God's people operate under the principle that there is no such thing as the odds being stacked against them because God is with them—then and only then will they have the boldness and courage to venture out into seeming impossible situations by faith.

Martin Luther said, *“One plus God is a majority!”*

One author had this to say on the subject—

“I used to be fearful of sharing the Word of God. What I didn't understand was that the Word of God has the real power to save...I have no such words. My words can be proven wrong and are untrustworthy, but the Word of God is without error. If you rely upon the Word of God, then even if you are the only one speaking the truth, you still have the majority...you plus God.”

Romans 8:31 (NKJV)

³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *can be* against us?

Dawson Trotman, founder of the Navigators, used to say that he considered it a sin if he went through an entire day and didn't ask God for anything great (for His glory and His work).

Often the difference between those that do great things for God and those that do not isn't their abilities—it is their availability—they ask Him if they can do something great for Him.

James tells us, *“You have not because you ask not...”*

Learn to pray “BHAG” prayers—BHAG stands for “Big, Hairy, Audacious, Goal”—just make sure you're not asking great things for yourself but for the glory of God.

There was a young pastor who asked an older Christian who was known for doing great things for God to pray with him.

After a little while the older man told the young pastor—“*You pray too small!*”

The reason our prayers are often too small is because our concept of God is too small.

It honors the Lord when we pray big prayers to our big God.

(Talk about my prayer for greater reach of my teaching ministry (small group) but God had in mind to reach Chicago by radio).

Jeremiah 33:3 (NKJV)

³'Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.'

William Carey, the famous missionary to India said, “*Attempt great things for God and expect great things from God.*”

➔ Talk about students on summer vacation who led 1200 people to the Lord

One author said,

“Every believer ought to be involved in something so big that, unless God is in it, it’s doomed to fail. Go in over your head. Do something that is so much bigger than you are, that unless God is in it, it can’t work. Jonathan models this mindset.”

“For nothing restrains the LORD...”—v.6

Let me qualify that—there are a few things that can restrain God from doing all He wants to do in and through and for us—

1. Unbelief—

Matthew 13:58 (NKJV)

⁵⁸ Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.

2. Rebellion—

Matthew 23:37 (NKJV)

³⁷ "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under *her* wings, but you were not willing!

Acts 7:51 (NKJV)

⁵¹ "*You* stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers *did*, so *do* you.

3. Apathy—

Ezekiel 22:30-31 (NKJV)

³⁰ So I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one. ³¹ Therefore I have poured out My indignation on them; I have consumed them with the fire of My wrath; and I have recompensed their deeds on their own heads," says the Lord GOD.

Now stepping out in faith is exciting but you must be sure you are stepping out in faith and not in presumption.

There are many Christians that take giant risks or who decide to step out into impossible situations calling it faith when really it's nothing more than pride and presumption masquerading as faith.

It reminds me of Peter stepping out of the boat during a storm on the Sea of Galilee (Matt.14:22-33—finish).

Many have said that Peter was presumptuous for asking the Lord if he could step out of the boat and walk to Him on the water.

It isn't presumptuous to *want* to step out in faith—it's only presumptuous to *do* so without the approval of God—Jesus said to Peter "*Come*"

If God gives you the green light to step out by faith into some impossible situation—by all means do it but you had better make sure God is telling you to do it or else disaster will ensue.

How do we make sure that we're stepping out in faith and not presumptuously?— By first of all remembering that "*Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.*" (Rom. 10:17).

So start by checking whatever you're planning on doing with the Word of God—if what you are planning on doing violates anything God has said in His Word.

If it does then to go ahead with your plans is not only presumption—it's disobedience and therefore sin.

I personally believe Jonathan was acting out of faith in the promises that God had already given His people about the battles they would face against their enemies—

Maybe at that moment Jonathan was thinking of the promise of God in Leviticus 26:7-8—

Leviticus 26:7-8 (NKJV)

⁷ You will chase your enemies, and they shall fall by the sword before you. ⁸ Five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight; your enemies shall fall by the sword before you.

Or maybe he was thinking of Shamgar and how he had killed over 600 Philistines with nothing more than an ox-goad—basically a sharp stick. (Judges 3:31)

Jonathan perhaps thought, *“If God could do it through Shamgar, He could do it through me!”*

Jonathan being a strong believer in God and knowing that nothing was impossible for God didn't have a problem with stepping out in faith—but he wanted to make sure that God was really in this venture in faith so before he stepped out he looked for—confirmation.

III. The Confirmation—v.7-12

1 Samuel 14:7-12 (NKJV)

⁷ So his armorbearer said to him, "Do all that is in your heart. Go then; here I am with you, according to your heart." ⁸ Then Jonathan said, "Very well, let us cross over to *these* men, and we will show ourselves to them." ⁹ If they say thus to us, 'Wait until we come to you,' then we will stand still in our place and not go up to them. ¹⁰ But if they say thus, 'Come up to us,' then we will go up. For the LORD has delivered them into our hand, and this *will be* a sign to us." ¹¹ So both of them showed themselves to the garrison of the Philistines. And the Philistines said, "Look, the Hebrews are coming out of the holes where they have hidden." ¹² Then the men of the garrison called to Jonathan and his armorbearer, and said, "Come up to us, and we will show you something." Jonathan said to his armorbearer, "Come up after me, for the LORD has delivered them into the hand of Israel."

So before Jonathan stepped out in faith he looked for and received confirmation from God that this was the course of action He wanted him to take—which begs the question how will God confirm to us that some decision or course of action is His will for our lives?

Henry Blackaby in his book, *“Experiencing God”* tells us there are 4 main ways—

- *Thru the Bible*
- *Thru Prayer*
- *Thru Circumstances*
- *Thru Other Christians*

Once you determine that God wants you to do something for Him—don’t hesitate—go for it with enthusiasm and expectation that He will do a great work through you.

IV. The Victory—v.13-23

1 Samuel 14:13-22 (NKJV)

¹³ And Jonathan climbed up on his hands and knees with his armorbearer after him; and they fell before Jonathan. And as he came after him, his armorbearer killed them. ¹⁴ That first slaughter which Jonathan and his armorbearer made was about twenty men within about half an acre of land. ¹⁵ And there was trembling in the camp, in the field, and among all the people [God began to throw the enemy into confusion]. The garrison and the raiders also trembled; and the earth quaked, so that it was a very great trembling. [God made sure His people and the enemy knew He was the One giving the victory]¹⁶ Now the watchmen of Saul in Gibeah of Benjamin looked, and *there* was the multitude, melting away; and they went here and there. ¹⁷ Then Saul said to the people who *were* with him, "Now call the roll and see who has gone from us." And when they had called the roll, surprisingly, Jonathan and his armorbearer *were* not *there*. ¹⁸ And Saul said to Ahijah, "Bring the ark of God here" (for at that time the ark of God was with the children of Israel). ¹⁹ Now it happened, while Saul talked to the priest, that the noise which *was* in the camp of the Philistines continued to increase; so Saul said to the priest, "Withdraw your hand." ²⁰ Then Saul and all the people who *were* with him assembled, and they went to the battle; and indeed every man's sword was against his neighbor, *and there was* very great confusion. ²¹ Moreover the Hebrews *who* were with the Philistines before that time, who went up with them into the camp *from the* surrounding *country*, they also joined the Israelites who *were* with Saul and Jonathan. ²² Likewise all the men of Israel who had hidden in the mountains of Ephraim, *when* they heard that the Philistines fled, they also followed hard after them in the battle.

Notice how when one or two people are willing to step out in faith and God begins to use them—others will follow and even those that have deserted will find new courage to join the battle.

Remember that the only one that will keep God from using you—is you!

2 Chronicles 16:9 (NKJV)

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...

1 Samuel 14:23 (NKJV)

²³ **So the LORD saved Israel that day, and the battle shifted to Beth Aven.**

Victory over the enemy in our lives (drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, pornography etc.) is always sweet—but remember the Lord no sooner gives you victory in one area than the enemy shifts the fight to a new front—each day brings a new battle so be on guard.

In closing one pastor had this to say—

“As this amazing victory unfolded, the Israelites who previously sided with the enemy suddenly found courage to change alliances. Others, hiding away because they were intimidated left their caves and began to move in glorious unity. It took only two young men who were willing to say, “Let’s go see what the Lord might want to do” to cause fearful men to surface and join the battle.

I wonder who is young of heart today. I wonder who is tired of the mundane and predictable, tired of that which is easy to do in your own energy. Maybe the Lord is saying to you, “There’s something I want to do that will be ground-shaking, something that will cause other people to get fired up and to get right.” I wonder who God is speaking to even now.”

When God asked “*Whom shall I send?*”—Isaiah responded, “*Here I am LORD send me!*”

These are dark days spiritually and morally—and dark days call for men and women of deep faith.

I'm convinced that in these Last Days God wants to do a great work.

His eyes are going to and fro throughout this world looking for those who are loyal, faithful and available.

He is looking for those believers, like Jonathan, who are willing to venture out in faith—those who are willing to say,

“I'm tired of sitting and doing nothing for the Lord—maybe God wants to do something incredible, something miraculous and maybe He wants to use me to do it!”

This could be your day—this could be your time.

Your whole life could have been prepared by God for such a time as this.

This is no time to sit there paralyzed by fear or frozen by apathy—

This is your time to say to God, *“Lord here I am send me!”*