

Painful Victory
1 Samuel Chapter 14

1 Samuel 14:1-52 [14:1] One day Jonathan the son of Saul said to the young man who carried his armor, "Come, let us go over to the Philistine garrison on the other side." But he did not tell his father. [2] Saul was staying in the outskirts of Gibeah in the pomegranate cave at Migron. The people who were with him were about six hundred men, [3] including Ahijah the son of Ahitub, Ichabod's brother, son of Phinehas, son of Eli, the priest of the LORD in Shiloh, wearing an ephod. And the people did not know that Jonathan had gone. [4] Within the passes, by which Jonathan sought to go over to the Philistine garrison, there was a rocky crag on the one side and a rocky crag on the other side. The name of the one was Bozez, and the name of the other Seneh. [5] The one crag rose on the north in front of Michmash, and the other on the south in front of Geba.

[6] Jonathan said to the young man who carried his armor, "Come, let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised. It may be that the LORD will work for us, for nothing can hinder the LORD from saving by many or by few." [7] And his armor-bearer said to him, "Do all that is in your heart. Do as you wish. Behold, I am with you heart and soul." [8] Then Jonathan said, "Behold, we will cross over to the men, and we will show ourselves to them. [9] If they say to us, 'Wait until we come to you,' then we will stand still in our place, and we will not go up to them. [10] But if they say, 'Come up to us,' then we will go up, for the LORD has given them into our hand. And this shall be the sign to us." [11] So both of them showed themselves to the garrison of the Philistines. And the Philistines said, "Look, Hebrews are coming out of the holes where they have hidden themselves." [12] And the men of the garrison hailed Jonathan and his armor-bearer and said, "Come up to us, and we will show you a thing." And Jonathan said to his armor-bearer, "Come up after me, for the LORD has given them into the hand of Israel." [13] Then Jonathan climbed up on his hands and feet, and his armor-bearer after him. And they fell before Jonathan, and his armor-bearer killed them after him. [14] And that first strike, which Jonathan and his armor-bearer made, killed about twenty men within as it were half a furrow's length in an acre of land. [15] And there was a panic in the camp, in the field, and among all the people. The garrison and even the raiders trembled, the earth quaked, and it became a very great panic.

[16] And the watchmen of Saul in Gibeah of Benjamin looked, and behold, the multitude was dispersing here and there. [17] Then Saul said to the people who were with him, "Count and see who has gone from us." And when they had counted, behold, Jonathan and his armor-bearer were not there. [18] So Saul said to Ahijah, "Bring the ark of God here." For the ark of God went at that time with the people of Israel. [19] Now while Saul was talking to the priest, the tumult in the camp of the Philistines increased more and more. So Saul said to the priest, "Withdraw your hand." [20] Then Saul and all the people who were with him rallied and went into the battle. And behold, every Philistine's sword was against his fellow, and there was very great confusion. [21] Now the Hebrews who had been with the Philistines before that time and who had gone up with them into the camp, even they also turned to be with the Israelites who were with Saul and Jonathan. [22] Likewise, when all the men of Israel who had hidden themselves in the hill country of Ephraim heard that the Philistines were fleeing, they too followed hard after them in the battle. [23] So the LORD saved Israel that day. And the battle passed beyond Beth-aven.

[24] And the men of Israel had been hard pressed that day, so Saul had laid an oath on the people, saying, "Cursed be the man who eats food until it is evening and I am avenged on my enemies." So none of the people had tasted food. [25] Now when all the people came to the forest, behold, there was honey on the ground. [26] And when the people entered the forest, behold, the honey was dropping, but no one put his hand to his mouth, for the people feared the oath. [27] But Jonathan had not heard his father charge the people with the oath, so he put out the tip of the staff that was in his hand and dipped it in the honeycomb and put his hand to his mouth, and his eyes became bright. [28] Then one of the people said, "Your father strictly charged the people with an oath, saying, 'Cursed be the man who eats food this day.'" And the people were faint. [29] Then Jonathan said, "My father has troubled the land. See how my eyes have become bright because I tasted a little of this honey. [30] How much better if the people had eaten freely today of the spoil of their enemies that they found. For now the defeat among the Philistines has not been great."

[31] They struck down the Philistines that day from Michmash to Aijalon. And the people were very faint. [32] The people pounced on the spoil and took sheep and oxen and calves and slaughtered them on the ground. And the people ate them with the blood. [33] Then they told Saul, "Behold, the people are sinning against the LORD by eating with the blood." And he said, "You have dealt treacherously; roll a great stone to me here." [34] And Saul said, "Disperse

yourselves among the people and say to them, 'Let every man bring his ox or his sheep and slaughter them here and eat, and do not sin against the LORD by eating with the blood.'" So every one of the people brought his ox with him that night and they slaughtered them there. [35] And Saul built an altar to the LORD; it was the first altar that he built to the LORD.

[36] Then Saul said, "Let us go down after the Philistines by night and plunder them until the morning light; let us not leave a man of them." And they said, "Do whatever seems good to you." But the priest said, "Let us draw near to God here." [37] And Saul inquired of God, "Shall I go down after the Philistines? Will you give them into the hand of Israel?" But he did not answer him that day. [38] And Saul said, "Come here, all you leaders of the people, and know and see how this sin has arisen today. [39] For as the LORD lives who saves Israel, though it be in Jonathan my son, he shall surely die." But there was not a man among all the people who answered him. [40] Then he said to all Israel, "You shall be on one side, and I and Jonathan my son will be on the other side." And the people said to Saul, "Do what seems good to you." [41] Therefore Saul said, "O LORD God of Israel, why have you not answered your servant this day? If this guilt is in me or in Jonathan my son, O LORD, God of Israel, give Urim. But if this guilt is in your people Israel, give Thummim." And Jonathan and Saul were taken, but the people escaped. [42] Then Saul said, "Cast the lot between me and my son Jonathan." And Jonathan was taken.

[43] Then Saul said to Jonathan, "Tell me what you have done." And Jonathan told him, "I tasted a little honey with the tip of the staff that was in my hand. Here I am; I will die." [44] And Saul said, "God do so to me and more also; you shall surely die, Jonathan." [45] Then the people said to Saul, "Shall Jonathan die, who has worked this great salvation in Israel? Far from it! As the LORD lives, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground, for he has worked with God this day." So the people ransomed Jonathan, so that he did not die. [46] Then Saul went up from pursuing the Philistines, and the Philistines went to their own place.

[47] When Saul had taken the kingship over Israel, he fought against all his enemies on every side, against Moab, against the Ammonites, against Edom, against the kings of Zobah, and against the Philistines. Wherever he turned he routed them. [48] And he did valiantly and struck the Amalekites and delivered Israel out of the hands of those who plundered them.

[49] Now the sons of Saul were Jonathan, Ishvi, and Malchi-shua. And the names of his two daughters were these: the name of the firstborn was Merab, and the name of the younger Michal. [50] And the name of Saul's wife was Ahinoam the daughter of Ahimaaz. And the name of the commander of his army was Abner the son of Ner, Saul's uncle. [51] Kish was the father of Saul, and Ner the father of Abner was the son of Abiel.

[52] There was hard fighting against the Philistines all the days of Saul. And when Saul saw any strong man, or any valiant man, he attached him to himself.

Story: There is a lot of information here . I'm going to try and cover as much of it as we can.

Saul has stationed his army in Gibeah. Samuel has left and so Saul uses another priest to accomplish his plans. He gets Ahiah, the high priest to do His bidding. Saul is scared and since Samuel has left him, he wants this new priest to make prayers and sacrifices on behalf of Saul.

Have you ever done this. When you don't hear what you want to hear from one person of God, you look for someone else to justify your position. To support your choices... even your sin?

Jonathan sees a group of Philistines from their camp and thinks that God might deliver these Philistines into his hands. But there is a big cravass between the two camps. The Israelites and the Philistines can see each other, but they are separated by a deep and rocky ravine. Scripture says there was a sharp rock on one side and a sharp rock on the other. The Israelites are below the Philistines. Not a good position.

But Jonathan thinks that it may be that the Lord will act on our behalf. That He might work for us in this. He takes action and tests his faith. Jonathan asks God to answer them with a sign. If they say "come up to us" Then Jonathan and his armor bearer will go up and meet them, for the Lord is with them. If they do not, then God is not with them.

The Philistines make a joke about the two of them saying that they must have come out of the holes they've been hiding in. (Many Israelites had deserted and have gone home or are hiding in caves and holes from the Philistines. The

Philistines probably thought that the two were deserters. They didn't need to go after them. Just call them up here. Come here, we have something we want to show you....

God answers and Jonathan acts. Jonathan and his armor bearer hike up the hill and kill 20 men almost immediately. The Philistines are scared to death when they see what has happened. They run around and even start fighting one another.

Saul asks to find out who from his army has done this. Saul has his priest begin praying a blessing but in the middle of this blessing Saul shuts him down. Saul figures that this is a good opportunity to strike and that God seems to be with them. They go into full attack mode and defeat the Philistines.

Saul, still in fear that the Philistines are not defeated places a curse on anyone of his army that eats any food until the day is over. He is doing so to make sure that his army finishes the job.

Jonathan does not hear about the curse and finds some honey in the forest and eats it. By the end of the day the people are so hungry they slaughter the livestock of the Philistines and start eating. The Israelites are so hungry and also afraid of the curse that Saul made, that they made sure to bleed out the meat. Somehow Saul found out that Jonathan had broken the law of Saul's curse.

Saul follows through with the fact that he must kill his own son for breaking the law of the curse. But the people who have seen Jonathan act so valiantly and with God's spirit on him call for Saul to spare Jonathan. They knew that Jonathan was the great hero of the day.

1. Saul wants what Saul wants. He wants God to act on his behalf. He is not interested in acting on God's behalf.

When Saul sins, he disregards God's judgment, gets himself another priest and tries to get this priest to agree with him.

Isn't this what we do? We have our plans, our schemes. We want God on our side. We want Him to help us with our agenda. We ask Him to help us. But we do so in fear. Sometimes we fear that God won't want what we want, so we try to figure out ways to justify our plans.

We look for allies in our sin. In our fear and cowardice, we try to get God to be on our side instead of being like Jonathan and trying to be on God's side

2. Jonathan wants what God wants. Jonathan trusts God. Jonathan is willing to give God an opportunity to use him. He is not trying to make God help him. He is looking to see if God is in this idea that is in his head. God probably gave him the idea to attack in this way. But Jonathan did not run off and do it. He asked God for help. He asked God to show him if this is what He should do.

Is faith always certain? Jonathan does not have faith in his plan or idea. He has faith in God.

Faith in a situation or a plan or a thing is not godly faith. Godly faith is when we trust in God and God alone not in a plan or a circumstance.

God changes our plans and circumstances. What worked last time may not work this time. We have to be humble and available for God to use us.

Many churches and faith organizations have become business oriented. They have action "plans". A 2, 5 and 10 year plan. This is not wrong necessarily. But many end up putting their faith in the plan and not necessarily in God.

We like to ask God to bless our plan instead of asking God if He has a plan for us.

What I love about Jonathan and this situation is that he says...

It may be that the LORD will work for us, for nothing can hinder the LORD from saving by many or by few."

Jonathan trusts the power of almighty God. He believes His God can do anything. He does not trust the plan.

Some folks are naturally optimistic. I can be this way. (my wife would say that I am a glass half empty guy, but I like to think of myself as the glass half full guy) Whether it's true or not is to be determined but I can assume that if it seems to be a decent idea, it should work. Why wouldn't it work?

But Jonathan is not being optimistic. He is asking God for direction. He does not say "Perhaps God will act for us, because we are rather clever and have a good plan"... If anything, his daring is a sign of trust in God. A trust rooted in the truth that Jonathan understands about God, who He is and what He will do on behalf of His people.

The beauty of Jonathan's faith is in his imagination: Come, let us go. Perhaps God will act for us... He has balance to his faith. He is open for God to move and content if God does not. "Perhaps".

It is as if Jonathan says, "God can do mighty works with very small resources, and God may be glad to do it in this case; and how can we know, dear armor-bearer, unless we place ourselves at his disposal?"

Jonathan is a wise son of a foolish father. He shows his trust in God while we witness Saul's apprehension and fear. Saul trusts more in himself than in God.

WHO KNOWS WHAT GOD WILL DO...?

These days, people like to talk a lot about faith. Like they know how faith in God works. What we should have faith for. How we should exercise our faith. There are books and sermon series and step by step instructions about the force of faith. It even makes its way into pop culture. Remember "The Secret"?

Many Christians today might think that to say "perhaps" cuts the nerve of faith, that if faith is faith it must always be certain, dogmatic and absolutely positive. Faith however, must not be confused with arrogance.

Sometimes we can display an arrogance to our faith.

The whole "God said it, I believe it, that settles it" campaign. The blab it and grab it thing. This kind of arrogant attitude that somehow I make things happen with "MY" faith. God works based on the strength of "MY" belief that my plans are important, godly and that I deserve to have them happen to me.

Just because "I" will it and have faith for it does not mean God wills it. Confession does not always bring possession.

Jonathan's "perhaps God will act for us" is part of his faith. He both confesses the power of God and retains the Sovereignty of God at the same time. He trusts in God. Not in his ability to believe in God.

Faith does not dictate to God, as if the Lord of Hosts is faith's errand boy. Faith recognizes its degree of ignorance. God is the one who knows all. God is the one who wills His salvation in us. God is the one.

Who know's what this omnipotent God may be delighted to do against these uncircumcised Patriots... er I mean Philistines.

Do you know what the difference between Saul and Jonathan is? Jonathan is not afraid to submit. To surrender to God and God's leadership.

Saul trusts in himself. He trusts in plans and programs, and schemes and ideas. Jonathan trusts in God. Jonathan gives God a place to work. Saul excluded God.

Jonathan is content with his role, and God has promoted him for it. Are you content with your role? Can you submit to leadership... at home, on the job, in your spiritual life? Or do you make the rules and then cram your rules and systems into what you think God might think is OK? You know what I mean?

Doing what you want, what you think is right and then justifying it with scripture. Like Saul. Saul knew that a sacrifice had to be made. He also knew that Samuel was the one who had to make the sacrifice. Saul did what he wanted and tried to excuse himself because he was “partially” obedient, in his own mind.

Partial obedience is not obedience. Obedience is complete and total. Complete obedience can only be accomplished through submission and surrender to God. To His leadership.

Can you be led by God? You know how you might be able to tell if you can be led by God? If you are really following God? By looking at your daily work and home life.

Do you accept the leadership in your home? Whoever it is? You're mother, father, husband, wife. Do you show submission to leadership?

Do you accept the leadership in the workplace? Do you submit willingly, even when you don't agree?

I've struggled with this. At work and at home. At work, I always thought I knew better than my bosses. I always thought they were not very good at their job. I thought myself better, smarter, faster, stronger.... And if I wasn't, it was my choice not to be.

Are you willing to be number 2 or number 3? Or 4 or 5 or 20th or 100th? Are you willing to serve.

Most of us don't get this until later in life, some of us never get it. All great leaders are first, great servants. They serve the people. They earn the right to lead.

As a pastor we are always getting folks that want access to the church audience. People who have a message they want to communicate for their own benefit. I say no to so many folks that want a ready made audience. Do you know why? **Because you've got to earn the right to speak into the lives of others.** You've got to serve them. Show them that you care. That you really love them. And letting someone else have that audience with your approval is risky. You've got to protect the people that you are leading.

Now some leaders don't think about protection, they are thinking or preservation.... Controlling the message that is spoken. This is different than what I'm talking about.

Are you one who thinks you can do it better? Are you continually critical of others and leaders in your life? I suggest that you ask God to show you the truth about your relationship with Him. Have you surrendered? Will you submit? Will you follow? Will you serve?

Now you might say to me: chuck, it's easy for you to say all of this... you're the leader. The number one. The lead pastor. And I would say this. You want the job, if it's God's will, you can have it.

We are led by a team of leaders that does our best to submit to God and to one another. I am in this lead position at God's pleasure and that of the elders of Port Gardner.

Part of being willing to be number 2 or 3 or 4 has another side to it as well. It means that you could be willing to lead. I was 49 when I was made the lead pastor of Port Gardner. I was not searching for it. I was content in my role as worship pastor. I don't know all the reasons why God did what He did... and continues to use me in this way, but I know this, I'm not above anyone, We're in this together. We're walking together. I'm not out front, I'm arm in arm with everyone else.

Leadership, more than anything, is bearing the burdens of your brothers and sisters. Loving them. Serving them. Pointing them to Jesus.

Can you do this? Would you like to do this? Point people to Jesus? If you would, who knows, perhaps God will act on your behalf.

3. Jonathan finds out that there are good and bad things that come with success.

Saul is acting a coward. Jonathan is acting the hero. Saul places this curse that affects Jonathan.

Jonathan does not fight it. He accepts his fate. He knows his role and his place. Sometimes, even when you do the right thing, bad things happen.

It's like the Christian life. Tim Keller says that if you are a believer, you live a life that is the happiest and saddest at the same time.

There can be sadness in good truth. You can be thrilled to be forgiven and sad that we live in such a sinful world. You can be happy that God loves you but sad that your family and closest friends don't know this great love of God.

Pause.

Kathleen and I have three grandchildren and we love the fun things they do and say. They turn things around in their head or in their speech and it makes for fun and interesting banter. Katie, our 6 year old granddaughter, when she was about 3 had a special day with Nana and Papa. We had a time for treats and she was able (through our generosity as doting grandparents, to procure from us a cookie and a sucker during the snack time. Not a bad haul for a kid.

Katie talked about how blessed she was and what an exciting day it is when you can enjoy a cookie AND a sucker at the **"both same time"**.

Children have some pretty interesting insights sometimes don't they?

I experienced a much deeper moment of insight with my granddaughter Katie at Christmas time. Katie's biological father is divorced from our daughter, Rochelle. Katie has a wonderful step father in Dave and he loves Katie so very much and Katie loves him. Katie calls Dave "Daddy". She also loves her biological father and calls him "Daddy" as well. This can sometimes be problematic as you can imagine. Kids are resilient and many times seem to handle these kinds of things well to our observing eye. But make no mistake, children suffer just like adults do in many ways.

Sometimes Katie has been encouraged to see that she is kind of "lucky" or blessed to have two dads in this way. It's kind of a way to soften the blow of the realities of divorce. At Christmas time this year, Katie was thinking about the time that she would be with her Hickman / Heiss family and the time she would be away and with her biological father and his family. You could see the consternation of her fact. Not too much but enough to know that it is an issue to her. She said to me in a quiet moment... "You know Papa, I know people tell me that I'm lucky to have two daddys, but I think that sometimes you can be lucky and feel sad at the both same time.

Our God loves us so much. We enjoy such great blessing in salvation and spiritual life through Christ. But our sadness can be great as well. When we see the hurt, the pain, the sin and the suffering in our temporal world, it can overwhelm us at times.

Jonathan is thankful and jubilant at the victory that God has provided. He had to be sad and disheartened when he was to be executed for breaking the law of his father. He had to be sad knowing his own father was a coward and a self centered King. What a terrible dilemma.

Yet he didn't fight it. He accepted it. He submitted himself to God's authority in his father King Saul. Yet God delivered him. I'm sure even though he was spared, that his relationship to his father King Saul was tarnished. It was probably never the same. What sadness.

What we need to know is that even in all the suffering and sadness, God is with us. He has ordained salvation for us. He has provided our lives to be eternally in His presence. To know sadness is not always such a bad thing. Because sadness can show us the greatness of God and His love for us. The words of a Katie express it well. It is so true... that we can be lucky and sad at **the both same time.**