

## A Tale of Two Faiths: One Living and One Dead (1 Samuel 14:1-23)

### 1. Jonathan's Living Faith (v.1, 6-14)

"One day" (v.1) transitions this narrative from the last scene (Saul is in Geba). Jonathan, along with his armor-bearer, left the camp unnoticed and made their way towards the Philistine encampment (near Michmash).

Plan (v.6-10): Jonathan devised a plan prior to reaching the foot of the hill: if the Philistines tell them to come up, they would ascend the hill. If they offered to come to them, they would stay. Regardless, Jonathan is looking for a fight.

Strategically, this was foolish for three reasons:

- A. He gave up the element of surprise (v.11)
- B. The Philistines have the tactical advantage of being at an elevated position
- C. There are hundreds, possibly thousands, of Philistines at the top of the hill

The Philistines mocked them (v.11) and invited them to come up so they can "show them a thing or two." This is a double entendre: through the Philistine vantage point, if they come up to them, they will kill them. From Jonathan's perspective, the Philistines will show them a "thing or two"; how to die at Jonathan's sword.

#### Individual Conviction:

- Conviction is the inner witness that presses the soul of a person to pursue, or avoid something. It may or may not be informed by truth.
- Jonathan is convinced that this is something that he must do. He may have been familiar with the promises of the LORD given to the Israelites as they entered the Promised Land.

Warning: Convictions can bring the greatest blessings, and the most painful chastisements from the LORD. Since convictions are strong impulses, we must be persuaded that they are informed by truth, and not our own selfish desires. They are not confirmed, or rejected based on their popularity. While convictions may be "your truth" that is not shared by others, they must fall under the principles of Scripture. The one acting on their convictions must be fully convinced in his mind (Romans 14:5).

#### Individual Effort:

- Not only did Jonathan have individual conviction, but also effort. Large results can flow from large efforts. The harvest through labor is never known until the effort is given.

*Conviction and the personal effort that proceeds from it is not a guarantee that the LORD will bless it. However, God often times blesses bold action that is rooted in truth.*

#### Theology of "Perhaps" (v.6)

- "Perhaps" or "it may be" acknowledges that the LORD has the power and discretion to act favorably on the prompting.
- Jonathan realizes that victory is not by numbers, elevation, or circumstances, but by the grace, power, and divine enablement of God alone.
- While "perhaps" does not guarantee the desired outcome, it motivates the individual to exert full effort, as though it depended on him. Even though full effort is given, that effort does not coerce or compel God to act.
- Great faith trusts the LORD to do what is good because He is good (Psalm 100:5) even when virtuous desires are not granted. Great faith is active and lively, yet never presumes that God will answer favorably to that desire.

### 2. Saul's Dead Faith (v.2-3, 16-21)

Situation: Saul has a diminished and fretful military (13:6-7, 15; 14:22) and is sitting under a pomegranate tree on the outskirts of Gibeah with 600 fearful soldiers. Samuel has also left him (13:15) which is problematic since he is God's mouthpiece.

Saving Power of the LORD: The watchmen see in the distance the Philistines in a great confusion. What led to the panic in the Philistine camp?

- A. The slaying of 20 Philistines by Jonathan and his armor bearer (v.14)
- B. The confusion enhanced by an "earthquake" which was either supernatural, or the result of soldiers scattering in all directions at the same time (v.15)
- C. Internecine killing (v.15)
- D. Hebrew soldiers who disguised themselves as Philistines, through Philistine equipment and weaponry, to infiltrate their ranks (v.21)

\*the LORD saved Israel through human agents (v.23)

Superficial Religion: With Samuel gone, Saul calls to him Ahijah (v.3). He is the great grandson of Eli, and nephew of Ichabod. We do not know how long Ahijah was there, and he is never mentioned prior to this account. Ahijah brought the ark from Kiriath-Jearim (7:2) and is wearing the ephod (14:3). The Urim and Thummim would have been on his breastplate (Ex. 28:30) and most likely consulted. Saul remains the only man who commanded the priest to withdraw his hand (v.19) during this exercise of intercession.

It is not surprising that Saul and Ahijah are side by side. Saul's own royal future glory is gone (13:13-14) and so is the line of Eli (2:31, 35). "Departed Royal Glory" (Saul) is next to Ahijah, the nephew of "Where is the Glory?" (Ichabod).

Both Saul and Jonathan have faith. Saul's dead faith is in the size of his army and religious exercises through the eyes of flesh. Jonathan's living faith placed him before the LORD, for Him to do whatever He saw fit.