

1st Samuel Ch 14

Sir Walter Scott was right when he wrote, “O what a tangled web we weave, When first we practice to deceive!” This is a fitting motto for Saul’s life, and would’ve been a true epitaph on his tombstone. So far we’ve begun to see the degradation and the breakdown in Saul’s character. His jealousy, his impatience, his spontaneity, or impulsive behavior, and his personal insecurity as his son won a great victory and he took the credit for it, blowing his own horn to get the praise of man.

We left off last week with the odds stacked high against the nation of Israel as the enemy was more or less lining up against them, the people were scattering from Saul, he’s gone from having 2,000 men at his side, down to 600 because the people are terrified of their enemies. And on top of it all they have no real weapons of warfare; the enemy has stripped them of their swords. And we spoke last week of how eager the enemy is to give us the necessary tools for success in this world in exchange for our swords, at the expense of the word of God. But how we need to be careful to safeguard our swords, the bible tells us that God has given us all things pertaining to life and godliness in His Word. So though it’s not wrong to go to college, or to earn a good living, we’re to never lay down our swords in exchange for those things.

But the odds are just right now for God to do a work, God loves to take impossible odds and do a radical work. God loves to let situations come to the very brink of disaster, and then step in and save the day. Why, why does God do that? Does He like to play head games with us, or like to see us develop ulcers or symptoms related to chronic stress and all? No, He’s trying to teach us #1 His faithfulness, encouraging us to trust in Him even when it seems like all hope is lost, remember we spoke of the lesson of endurance that we all so critically need to learn that God teaches us through trials and tribulations. But then also as you know #2 God doesn’t want there to be any confusion as to who it is who does the work so that He alone receives the glory. And so He takes humanly impossible odds, works deliverance in and through them and then our faith is increased and we dare not touch His glory because it’s real clear in our hearts and minds Who’s done the work and so God gets all the credit He’s due.

The Egyptians are closing in on the nation of Israel, there’s mountains to the left, mountains to the right, the Red Sea is in front of them, and there’s no place to go, the situation is impossible, death or at the very least, slavery is imminent. And just when it’s real clear in everyone’s heart and mind that there isn’t any man who’s going to deliver them from this situation. No human ingenuity or cleverness that’s going to work this problem out, Moses turns to the people and shouts those words that renews the hope in the hearts of the people, “*Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will accomplish for you today.*” Ex 14:13

You see we freak out, we get all worked up and stressed out, but the word of the Lord is “Don’t be afraid, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will accomplish for you today.”

In this which seems to be the darkest hour of your life, God did it again with Gideon, the odds were over 400:1 against him, Shamgar, and 600:1 Samson faced odds 1,000:1. And on and on we could go if we had the time of how God has been faithful to His people throughout all time and so often working glory to Himself in the humanly impossible. Of course the grandest and most glorious work that He's ever done through the humanly impossible is the work of redemption through the cross of Jesus Christ Working life to us, through His death, an impossibility with man, but with God all things are possible, and through that work God and God alone receives the glory.

Well, once again we see an impossible situation facing the children of Israel in our text tonight, 30,000 chariots, 6,000 horsemen, and foot soldiers so vast that they were innumerable all flexing their military muscles towards Israel, preparing to take them out.

Now this could've been Saul's finest hour, he could've sought the Lord, prepared his troops, spoken to them of Gideon, and Samson, how God fought for them against the Egyptians and delivered them from the hands of their enemies. He could've bolstered their faith by reminding them of the fact that God had given that land to Israel, and that God had promised to go before them in order to purge the land. And that the same God that rained down hail mingled with fire upon the Egyptians, and parted the Red Sea before the eyes of the nation, is the same God that was going to part the sea of Philistines that lay before them, and that God would once again deliver His people.

But instead the focus of ch 14 shifts from Saul, (who's really already been a thorn primarily in Israel's side) to Jonathan Saul's son, whom we find to be an incredible man of faith. Now listen, there's something I want you to note about Jonathon because I'm not going to draw specific attention to it as we go through, but it's an important detail, especially in this day and age in which we live when everyone has an excuse for the reason they do what they do and act the way they act. Now, I will grant you the fact that generally what we seem to see in the scriptures is a dad who follows hard after the Lord, and his sons rebel. Such as the case with Samuel, or even Eli, and Aaron who's sons offered profane fire before the Lord and God struck them dead. But with Jonathon we find just the opposite, we see a dad who really didn't walk with God, develop a relationship with God, or even fear God, he made bad decisions, was full of pride and jealousy, and yet his son was an incredible man of God, who feared God, trusted God, and followed God. What's my point? How many times do we hear people seeking to justify their present sinful condition by the way their dads acted towards them while they were growing up. They cast a shade of grey over their childhood, and the poor upbringing that they had and say, "You see I really never had a chance, I was destined to be a pedophile, or an abuser, or an alcoholic or a serial killer," or whatever. "My dad was a creep, so I'm a creep." Jonathon says to that mentality, "I don't think so" there's no justifiable blame game, even though Saul was a creep, Jonathon didn't follow in his dad's footsteps, he followed the footsteps of his Heavenly Father and took on *His* personality, rather than his fleshly father, well, we read in vs 1.

Vs1

So sometime has seemingly past (though probably not much) since the Philistines fortified themselves with this huge army in response to Jonathon's 1st attack on 1 of their garrisons. And it happened one morning that Jonathon was stirred, (no doubt by the Holy Spirit) and he turns to his armor bearer and says, "Hey, lets go check out what's happening in the enemies camp" "Lets do a little spying, or move on the offense into enemy territory." So even though on the onset the day started absolutely as ordinary as any other, today was going to unfold to be an extra ordinary day to say the least.

And the armor bearers were the men who carries the huge upright shields that would block to whole body from incoming arrows, and they'd have a weapon or 2 on them, and generally what would happen would be that as officer was flailing away at the enemy and knocking them down in the heat of the battle, the armor bearer would come along behind him and finish them off. But at the same time he had to be very mindful of the circumstances surrounding his officer because often times his life was in his hands, and so the armor bearer was a critical man, had to be a very loyal and brave individual.

And as the officer would slice, or stab the man he was fighting so that he fell, if the battle was fierce he didn't have time to see if he was dead or not, when the guy fell, he was immediately faced with someone else and so the armor bearer would take off the guys head or somehow insure the fact that he was dead. So there had to be some comraddory there between the 2 because the armor bearer had to agree with you or else you'd probably get killed, and I point that out because the armor bearer is often overshadowed, but don't think for a moment that he didn't have to be just a brave if not more so than the officer that he served with.

Now Jonathon didn't tell his father, why? Probably because he knew that his dad would readily object to him venturing off, after all he already through one fit about Jonathon's escapades, there's no way he'd approve of this.

Vs2

You see, begin to notice the contrast in the character of these 2 men, Jonathon is on the move, Saul is just sitting there doing nothing, Jonathon is on the offense, storming enemy territory and taking ground for the kingdom, you might say, he's doing the work of an evangelist, fulfilling his ministry. While Saul just sits idly by, not to concerned (seemingly) over the whole deal, Jonathon is a laborer, Saul is a spectator, we spoke about this Sunday morning.

Vs3

Now remember, Samuel walked away from Saul previously because he tried to fulfill the role of a priest, and over stepped his bounds, so now Saul is associating with these guys, the rejected line of Eli, Ichabod probably being mentioned there so we could see the word association, Ichabod means "The glory has departed" we probably shouldn't miss that regarding it's association with Saul.

Vs4-6

That needs to be underlined in your bible, this is what we refer to as a “Venture of Faith” they’re captivating words. Jonathon was just sitting around 1 morning, probably pondering the thought throughout the night, thinking “This isn’t right”, “The enemy has us beat down and driven back, we’re hiding out like a bunch of hunted animals in caves and dens.” and Then all of the sudden the thoughts of Shamgar start running through his mind, you see I suggest to you that Jonathon knew his bible. He remembered the Red Sea incident, the things that Gideon did, and Samson, he probably recalled to mind that area of Scripture in Duet 32 which tells us that with the Lord on our side, 1 will chase a thousand and 2 will put 10,000 to flight. And Jonathon dared to believe it, and he thought, “What are we doing here?” and The magnitude of his God began to bolster his faith, and he looked over at his armor bearer and he said, “What do you say, let’s go over into enemy territory and see what God wants to do, there’s not 10,000 guys on that ridge. If God wants to deliver them into our hands, it’ll be a cakewalk. For nothing restrains the LORD from saving by many or by few.” The book of Daniel tells us, “*the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits.*” Dan 11:32 2 Chron 16:9 says, “*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.*”

God can do great works through just a few people who are dedicated, and consecrated to Him; he took 12 guys and turned the world upside down for Jesus Christ

And I say these things because so many times we fall into the snare of thinking, “Oh, who am I, I’m just one guy, I’m just one gal.” Or, “We’re not a mega church, if we had 5,000 people in this church God could do so much, but who are we?” “We’re just little Calvary of Joplin.” Hey listen, *nothing* restrains the Lord from saving by many or by few. God is looking to our hearts, if there just happens to be a few of us, all the more glory for God.

Now remember the whole point here is storming ground for the kingdom, so God wants to continue to expand our borders, and He will. But it’s not the worlds economy that we ascribe to, the world says, “It takes money to make money” and in the world that may be true. But I think it’s a snare to prescribe to that line of reasoning in the church and say, “Hey, there has to be more people if God’s going to do more” God only needs 1 who will truly die to self and say, “God here’s my life, now go for it.” That’s what Jonathon did, He just said, God, if you want to do a work I’m available.

Vs7

So his armor bearer confirms the notion on his heart, and comes in agreement with him, oh how we need people like this in our lives, we want to have those people in our lives who are going to encourage us in our progressive moves in the Lord. Whenever we want to step out and lean on God, get in a little bit over our heads just to see what God will do. And it’s not that they’re presuming on God, or have no biblical basis for what they’re doing so we’re not endorsing foolishness in the name of God.

But when God's dealing with your heart, encouraging you to step out and trust the promises of His Word, we need those people who will come along side and support us in that. (So upon hearing those words, Jonathon's ready to rock and roll, I can almost see a smile come to his face like, "Can you believe this, we're actually going to do it, Ok now here's the game plan."

Vs8-12

So Jonathon says, here's the deal, let's go over there and we'll pop our heads up and let these guys see us and if they say, "Hey, wait right there, we're going to come down there and clean your clock" then we're going to know that God's not in this thing. But if they say, "Hey, come on up here and we'll show you a thing or 2" prompting them to come up to them for the fight, he says, "Then we'll know that God's in this thing and has delivered them into our hands." and I want you to notice the past tense, he's ready to believe God that it's already a done deal, they just need to wrap it up. He's confident in the Lord, this is how this differs from Gideon's event, Gideon had God's confirmed word, but doubted it. Jonathon is anxious to believe God as soon as God confirms his (Jonathon's) thoughts as His (God's) direction. You see he says, that if it goes the latter way that God "has" not "will" God already *has* delivered them into our hands, it's all over but the mopping up.

So they show themselves to these guys, and they say, "Hey, look the Hebrews are coming up out of their hiding holes, come on up here boys, and we'll show you something." and Jonathon said, that's it, lets go and he scrambles up to them on his hands and knees, so he led by example. He didn't just have great ideas for other guys to carry out; he was willing to take the lead on this thing. And sometimes the path that God calls us to take is a difficult one, this wasn't a nonchalant type of an ordeal, it was a hard climb, he was on his hands and knees scurrying up the side of the cliff.

Vs13-14

Now the church here sits on about 3 acres, so in this playground area over here or so Jonathon just as fast as he can is flailing and charging these guys, he's taking them down, and his armor bearer is taking them out, and I have no doubt it was an amazing scene of incredible valiancy as he took out 20 men just one right after another or maybe 2 at a time here and there.

Vs15

So God honored their faith and began to cause this earthquake so that the enemy was trembling on the inside, everything was quaking on the outside, and they were literally all shook up, watching these guys just mowing through people faster than they can comprehend what's happening.

Vs16-19

Saul still hasn't learned his lesson, he sees all this taking place, hears all the commotion, realizes that Jonathon is once again going to make a name for himself while Saul falls through the cracks and so he tells the priests to back off. In other words what he's saying is in the midst of the whole process of finding out what's going on, he calls for the priests and then as the commotion gets louder and louder he's all, "We don't have time for this, I've got to do something" he's still not waiting on God's direction for him, so he acts impulsively.

Vs20

If you're in an army that's even ½ the size of this one, you just don't know everyone, and all you know is there are people all around you with swords everyone is in a panic, you're all under attack, and it became everyman for himself. But God promised to do this for them, Ex 23:27

"I will send My fear before you, I will cause confusion among all the people to whom you come, and will make all your enemies turn their backs to you." And here we're seeing it happen.

Vs21-22

Remember those people that we spoke of that would rather have peace with the enemy than have victory in the Lord because it's just not worth the hassle and the warfare, well, when they see things going the other way, they're generally quick to jump on the coattails of another mans faith. But in one respect whatever it takes to get people engaged in the fight (as unto the Lord) then praise the Lord. Notice vs 23

Vs23

So even though Jonathon was a key vessel, and many men fought, it was the Lord who saved Israel that day, with out Him we can do nothing.

Vs24-26

Again we're seeing the foolish impulsiveness of Saul, now he tried to camouflage it in spiritual lingo, but the fact is, it was a self-centered, egotistical vow that placed his men in much distress. You don't hold out nutrients from men in the midst of a battle and say whoever eats until my enemies are avenged is a dead man. #1 They weren't Saul's enemies they were Israel's and the Lord's enemies, #2 Saul doesn't have the priestly authority to pronounce cursing on anyone.

Now, Canaan was said to be a land flowing with milk and honey, and here we have a glimpse into the reality of that. They come rushing into this forest in pursuit of their enemies and all this honey is literally dripping out of the trees onto the ground right in front of their face. Now they're starving, haven't eaten all day, and have been fighting hard. It'd be like putting in a 12 hr day with out anything to eat and on your way home you turn the corner and lo and behold, gringo bags everywhere! Or Sonic Size chili cheese fries and route 44 drinks all over the place, it's cruel and unusual punishment, because you can't have any of it or else you'll be put to death.

Vs27-35

Forgive me if this is wrong to say, but man Saul is such an idiot, it was his dumb vow that made them fall into such a snare. Notice the downward progression, in vs 24 the people were distressed, in vs 28 they were faint, in vs 31 they were very faint and in vs 32 they were diving into unclean flesh. Now Jonathon didn't follow that progression, why, because he partook of the honey.

Listen, don't miss this, the honey, Jonathon dipped into the honey and it lifted his countenance and gave him the necessary sustenance to endure the battle with out sinning against the Lord. Those who refrained were distressed, then they were faint, then they were very faint, and finally they were completely in the flesh, that which was unclean.

What does the psalmist say, "*How sweet are Your words to my taste, Sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way.*" Ps 119:103,104

If you're not partaking consistently, daily into the sweetness of the Word of God, if you're not dipping into God's Word and taking down into the inner most part of your being, then mark my words. In this warfare you'll grow distressed, and then faint, and then very faint, and before you know it you won't be able to resist diving into that which is unclean and frolicking in the flesh all together, that's the lesson here.

Vs36

Mr. Impulsive idea again, "Hey, lets go get those guys" and the priests are all, "Saul, can we at least pray about this, we're in warfare here, don't you think we should draw near to God?"

Vs37

Ps 66:18 says, "*If I regard iniquity in my heart, The Lord will not hear.*" God's not going to respond to the unrepentant, and it's not that He's holding out on us, but He's not going to act like there's *no* problem when there's *big* problems. Now Saul's so twisted that he's sure it's everyone else and not him and God will reveal what's happened regarding Jonathon, but Saul is the one who's sinned, let's not be confused here.

Vs38-39

Interesting that he would name Jonathon isn't it, why do I have this suspicion he already knows and this looks like a justifiable way to off his son whose taking the spot light off of him. Jonathon wasn't there when he made that oath, and Saul knows that, he's just a paranoid man who wants anything that takes the limelight off of him done away with.

Vs40-43

Time evades us, but the point here is that Jonathon didn't seek to defend himself, he was willing to lay down his life, what an example that is to you and me. The cry of his heart, "I must die" I wonder how many here tonight that's true of, it's time to die, to give Christ free reign in my heart. Saul refused to die, Jonathon was willing to die and so must we be, Jesus said that to find life we have to lose our lives for His sake. I must die.

Vs44-46

So Jonathon simply trusted the Lord, and God came to his defense in the men of Israel and said, "Not today Saul, you've gone far enough!" and So everyone went home and cooled off.

Vs47-52

Continued to build his special forces team.