

The following is a rough transcript, not in its final form and may be updated.

Jonathan's Faith I Samuel 14:1-6

Intro: I Sam 14:6 is one of my favorite passages of our study through this book. Now, while the context of the verse is very different from what we as a church and a community have been going through these last few weeks, the attitudes and motivations displayed in this passage are appropriate for our current situation. All of us have faced some serious issues and difficult circumstances of varying degrees and for many of us, they are still ongoing with no apparent end in sight. With the storm still fresh in our minds and the recovery just now starting to gear up, I think it is important for us to step away from our study of Philippians for this week and look at something that will focus our hearts and our faith on God's ability to deliver.

1-6 – Wow! What can we make of this? Jonathan is facing a garrison of the Philistine army that numbers as the sand of the sea (**13:5**). The Israelite army was grossly outnumbered and it was the same in this scene – only worse. Here' it's just Jonathan and his armor-bearer – 2 men against an entire garrison. What does Jonathan say in the face of such overwhelming odds? "Let's go over and pick a fight!" Is he crazy? Does he have a death wish? Or, is Jonathan just a glutton for punishment? Humanly speaking, when you look at the match up, there's just no way this will turn out good for Jonathan, even less so for the lowly armor-bearer!

We need to realize that Jonathan is not just some scrapper looking to cause a big ruckus. He has a sound, theological reason for saying this and he hints at it in v6. "*Come, let us go over to...these uncircumcised.*" Using the label "uncircumcised" shows that Jonathan recognized the spiritual status of his enemy – they were outside of a covenant relationship with YHWH while he and his armor-bearer enjoyed that special, privileged relationship! There's a jealousy burning in Jonathan's heart for the Lord and he's willing to step up and do the thing that is well outside of his comfort zone, something the Lord has put directly in front of him, something the Lord has put directly in his heart.

Where does Jonathan's great faith come from, from Israelite society? Not at all! Israelite society was so spiritually bankrupt that just a few chapters

before this, they had asked Samuel to appoint a king to rule over them. Bad things were happening around them and instead of drawing closer to YHWH, they figured they'd be better off having a king rule over them and fight their battles for them like all the other nations around them. Now, the *request* for a king wasn't the problem; putting their *trust* in a king to be the solution for all their problems – that's the real villain here. The king wasn't supposed to be a substitute for Samuel, he was to be a substitute for YHWH! That was the spiritual level of Israelite society.

Did Jonathan learn this faith from his father? Not at all! In the previous chapter, Saul was notified by Samuel that God had rejected him from being king over Israel because he presumed to perform the duties of a priest in direct conflict with the explicit command of God. Saul proved to be a self-centered king, one that would readily overstep his boundaries if the current situation demanded action. He would act without any consideration for God's Word, God's will or God's honor. Thus the political leadership of Israel accurately reflected the spiritual condition of the population of Israel.

The spiritual leadership of Israel wasn't any better. Ahijah the priest is mentioned in v3 and the author graciously gives us his family tree. He's the son of Ichabod (no glory), who was the son of Phineas (meat-loving, woman-chasing priest), who was the son of Eli (lineage judged & excluded). This is a miserable heritage and YHWH's judgment against Eli meant that Ahijah was a lame-duck priest. He is ministering on borrowed time; of no help to Saul; Israel or to himself. With such a stellar cast of characters, it's no wonder that we see Saul sitting under a tree – If he's not going to trust in God, what else does he have to do?

But, while Saul is sitting, Jonathan is moving! Where did his faith come from? We know it didn't come from his environment or his circumstances. There was nothing visible in this entire scenario to stimulate any optimism on Jonathan's part. The outlook was grim! But what Jonathan is revealing here isn't optimism – its faith. Some people are naturally optimistic but faith can arise even when no reasons for optimism exist. All you need are reasons for faith to exist and the reasons for faith are only found in God!

Jonathan's own words reveal the basis of his faith: a clear conviction about God (nothing restrains the Lord from saving) produces a great expectation of God (may be the Lord will work for us) while recognizing God's normal

manner of working (by many or by few). Jonathan's not trusting in the strength of his faith or in his own abilities. Jonathan is only daring because he trusts in God; and this trust is rooted in the truth about God. He knew **Lev 26:7-8** and **Deut 28:7**. He had read of all the heroic actions of the judges who trusted in the Lord and were used by God to win great victories for Israel. Jonathan's faith wasn't haphazard or misguided; it was grounded in the truth about YHWH, truth revealed through God's Word.

The beauty of Jonathan's faith is in its balance (it may be = perhaps). He believed God could do great things with small resources and that God may be pleased to in this case, but – how would they know unless they actually put themselves at God's disposal? How would they see God do great things if they are not willing to be used by God to do His will? In his statement, Jonathan confesses the power of God and retains the freedom of God. You see, Jonathan wasn't questioning God's ability to act, to deliver, to save. He was sure of that! The only thing Jonathan was unsure of was the logistics of the deliverance. Would YHWH save by many or by few? He had no clue how God would bring deliverance but he made himself available and trusted in the Lord to use his life as He saw fit.

Today, we're facing a task as equally daunting as Jonathan. The destruction, the disruption, the chaos, the not knowing – it can all be a bit overwhelming. But no matter how dire the circumstances are – the nature and character of the God that we serve has not changed one bit. Every truth we knew about God before the storm is still true of Him 2 weeks after the storm. He is a God of grace, of mercy, of compassion. He is a God who saves, delivers and restores. He is a God who protects and a God who provides. He is all this and so much more and as we study His Word, we get a clearer picture of Who this God is. The more we discover, the more we see – the better He looks.

So, we know God loves us, cares for us and provides for us in big and small ways. But, like Jonathan, the only thing we don't know, the part that we're not privy to; is the logistics – how God will provide. The good thing about that is – we don't need to know how, we just need to be confident that the Lord knows how He's going to do it. If He were to sit down and try to explain it to us – it would probably blow our minds!

If God would have told Raj 2 weeks ago that a couple of Christians from

Virginia and a believer from Florida (who happened to be in Arkansas) would show up at his next-door neighbors house and show them the love of Jesus Christ in a tangible, undeniable way; the same love the Nathaniel family has been expressing to them for years – you wouldn't have believed it! It is too incredible to even be possible – but that's exactly what happened!

Throughout all of this, each of us has personally seen God provide in small ways and in large ways: from the spiritual unction to pick up a certain type of tape for no apparent reason to inadvertently placing a plastic bin on a box that just so happened to catch all the water that leaked through the roof. Contrast those small mercies with herculean efforts required to move personnel and materials across the country and then be able to house and feed them for the duration. God has miraculously provided these things up to this point so there shouldn't be any doubt that He can't continue to do so.

You may believe that your situation is beyond bad, that you can't see God's mercies anywhere. Well, they may be because you're looking at the problem instead of turning to and trusting in the solution. It could be that you have been living for yourself so long that you've grown accustomed to ignoring the presence of God in your life. Today is the day you should rectify that. Maybe God's just trying to get your attention. Does it take a CAT 4 hurricane to do that? For some people yes, for others it may take more.

There may not be a whole lot in front of you that stimulates a lot of optimism but Christians don't live on optimism – we live by faith. By faith in a God who is not slack concerning His promises, who is able and ready to supply all our need according to His riches in glory. We don't know how He's going to supply it, we just know He is able and willing. You don't need to know all the logistics; you just need to know the logistics Manager. He is forcing us out of our comfort zone and has placed a divine opportunity directly in front of each one of us. Will we take a daring step and seize the opportunity by faith – for the glory of our God? 😊