

I overthink a lot of things, which can get me in trouble at times, but it helps me win a lot of board games.

I love playing board games, especially long ones that require lots of strategy and planning.

I will spend hours thinking through strategies and calculating all the different options so I can find the most efficient and effective way to win.

The way this plays out is that if we are playing a war game.

Or any game with any conflict.

I like to set it up so that I am going to win before we even go to battle.

I try to strategize and stack the odds in my favor so that I have already won before it happens.

I don't want there to be luck or lots of chance or faith.

I just want my victory to be guaranteed by math and my genius.

That attitude might be fine when it comes to games, but it is deadly if that is how we approach faith.

Some of us treat God that way.

We are only willing to trust God if everything will clearly work out.

Or we only feel confident in the LORD when we can see success.

It is the exact opposite of the attitude we will see Jonathan have in our text.

Turn with me to 1 Samuel 13:15-14:23.

I. Have faith and act like nothing can hinder God.

Even when things seem grim.

Even when circumstances are not good.

Even when the odds are overwhelming.

Nothing can stop God.

That is what this whole section and battle is about.

It is seeking to remind us that nothing can stop God.

He does not need massive armies.

He does not even need willing human beings to join Him.

He does not need people of great faith.

God can bring victory; however He decides to do it.

Because this is true, the choice that we have is whether to have faith or to doubt.

Whether to participate in this victory because we know that it is coming.

Or whether we will doubt it.

Whether we will act like it.

Because some of us believe this truth.

Or we intellectually affirm that nothing can hinder God.

But we do not always act like it.

Verse 15, **"And Samuel arose and went up from Gilgal. The rest of the people went up after Saul to meet the army; they went up from Gilgal to Gibeah of Benjamin. And Saul numbered the people who were present with him, about six hundred men."**

We see how many people are left.

There are only 600 men in the army of Saul and Jonathan.

They had 3,000 and now most of them have left.

And remember from last week, the Philistines have 36,000 cavalry.

The Philistine army is so large that it cannot be counted.

The situation is dire and it does not look like God can save.

Verse 16, **"And Saul and Jonathan his son and the people who were present with them stayed in Geba of Benjamin, but the Philistines encamped in Michmash."**

This is when we are finally told Jonathan is Saul's son.

And Jonathan is our primary character here.

And he is a great one.

Because he will show great faith.

He is a foil to his father.

And he should inspire us.

Verse 17-18, **"And raiders came out of the camp of the Philistines in three companies. One company turned toward Ophrah, to the land of Shual; ¹⁸ another company turned toward Beth-horon; and another**

company turned toward the border that looks down on the Valley of Zeboim toward the wilderness."

The Philistines are coming.

They send out raiding parties.

The battle is getting closer.

Villages and Israelite homes and farms are being attacked, robbed, and burned.

Things are not looking good.

Because they cannot stop it.

And we find out things are even worse.

Verse 19, **"Now there was no blacksmith to be found throughout all the land of Israel, for the Philistines said, "Lest the Hebrews make themselves swords or spears."**

They do not have any blacksmiths.

Anyone who could make weapons in Israel has been killed.

The Philistines do not allow it.

Their thumb and hand have been heavy on Israel.

Verse 20, **"But every one of the Israelites went down to the Philistines to sharpen his plowshare, his mattock, his axe, or his sickle, ²¹ and the charge was two-thirds of a shekel for the plowshares and for the mattocks, and a third of a shekel for sharpening the axes and for setting the goads."**

This means they have to enrich the Philistines.

Anytime they need to sharpen things, they have to pay.

And these prices are too much.

Picture how much it costs to get a hot dog at a stadium.

Just obscene and unfair.

Even if they get their axes sharpened to have some weapons, they are just making the Philistines rich!

They are paying their enemies.

Verse 22, **"So on the day of the battle there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people with Saul and Jonathan, but Saul and Jonathan his son had them."**

This is how bad the situation is.

They have only 600 men.

And they have two swords.

Only Saul and Jonathan have swords.

The only swords in the whole nation.

It is not enough that they are outnumbered beyond hope.

They don't even have weapons.

We are to picture them fighting with pitchforks and farm tools.

Verse 23, **"And the garrison of the Philistines went out to the pass of Michmash."**

The Philistines are coming.

They are nearing where Israel is hiding.

Verse 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."**

This is where we hear Jonathan speak for the first time.

The first words out of his mouth are "let's go check out the Philistines.

Just him and the child who carries his armor.

They are going to see what is happening.

But they need to do it secretly.

Presumably, because his dad would not approve.

But already we see Jonathan's faith.

Verse 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,"**

They are hiding in a cave.

This ragtag would be army.

And we get the names of some of the other people.

Verse 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."**

This is not a great man.

He comes from Eli.

He is not Samuel.

This is not one of the priests who have a great legacy.

We will come back to the ephod and its significance later.

But we see the priest does not come.

So, Jonathan sneaks over the rocks and crags to see.

verse 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.'"**

Here we get the point of the adventure.

They are not scouting.

They are not on a military expedition.

This is an expedition of faith.

He wants to see if God will give them victory.

Jonathan understands the spiritual truth.

He recognizes that if God wants to save them, it doesn't matter if they have 600 or 6 billion.

God can save them with just the two of them if he wants.

So Jonathan is willing to trust in the Lord and to see what he wants.

He has the faith to trust and act.

Now it's also good to see that Jonathan doesn't assume God must help them win.

There is a difference in believing God can aid and God must aid.

This is a trap sometimes Christians can fall into.

God can help us, and he can bless us, and he can always heal and always provide and always make a way.

But he does not always do that.

So we should ask, but we shouldn't presume.

If God does not heal, it does not mean we lacked faith.

If God does not bring victory, it does not mean we should have done something.

God can do anything He pleases.

But He does not have to.

So Jonathan is asking in faith.

And I want you to see too, that he is taking a step of faith in asking

He is not just staying back at the camp in a cave in a corner praying asking for God to send a sign.

He heads towards the Philistines towards the battle towards the army, putting himself in danger in faith and asking.

Our faith often involves taking a step.

He doesn't draw a sword in a battle, but he gets closer to it.

Jonathan is not expressing doubt, but he is acknowledging God does not have to deliver.

Verse 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."**

The armor-bearer is with him.

First he says to do what is in your heart.

This is not a follow your heart.

Today we hear this and picture a young hero of a movie being told to just be themselves.

This is not what they meant.

It means, since your heart is to honor God, let's do it.

Let us live like those who are faithful.

Verses 9-10, **"Then Jonathan said, "Behold, we will cross over to the men, and we will show ourselves to them. '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."

We also see him then asking God for a sign.

He wants the Philistines to invite them to fight

I want you to see again, this is NOT a ridiculous sign.

This is not Jonathan saying God if you want us to fight send a bolt of lightning right there.

It's a normal response.

In fact, we may even expect the Philistines if they see the Israelites that they know have been hiding, to tell him quit hiding and being cowards come fight us.

So even in his asking for a sign, it is not God asking him to prove himself.

Jonathan is saying God I know that if you want us to win, we can.

And I'm ready and willing to go into battle just give me the OK and I will go and do it trusting that you will deliver.

God gives the sign and Jonathan enters the battle.

Two people take on a whole garrison.

And he does not have confidence in his own abilities as a swordsman, but in the God who has the sword.

Verse 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."**

This is the moment of faith.

They reveal themselves to the enemy.

They make themselves vulnerable trusting in God alone.

And the Philistines see them.

And the Philistines respond by mocking them right away.

And they invite them to come and fight.

Verse 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.'"**

This is the sign.

They are invited to join the fight.

Jonathan recognizes this is what he asked for.

And I love what he says.

He says that God has done this.

The Philistines will lose because God has given them into our hands.

And he invites the armor-bearer to come.

He says that he is going.

He will go and fight by himself even if no one else is willing.

Even though he is the son of the king, he will go first.

And he invites the servant to join him in faith.

Verse 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."**

So they have to climb.

They climb up to fight.

They are making themselves even more vulnerable.

They could be killed before they even get to the top.

As they climb, they have to have faith with every step.

But God gives them over.

And the Philistines immediately begin to die.

Verse 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."**

Jonathan and the young man with him both kill about twenty men.

All by themselves, they begin a slaughter.

And this happens when the armor-bearer does not even have a sword.

He might not even have a weapon at the beginning.
But they climb and fight.
They act like nothing can hinder God.

Verse 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."**

This is where God sends the victory.
A massive panic spreads through the camp.
All of the Philistines lose their minds.
They tremble and shake with fear.
And the earth itself quakes and rumbles.
God Himself sends a great panic.
Two men cause the entire camp to begin to flee and fight among themselves.

Verse 16, **"And the watchmen of Saul in Gibeah of Benjamin looked, and behold, the multitude was dispersing here and there."**

The other watchmen see what is happening.
They see that the massive army they have been expecting to come and attack is retreating.
They are all breaking up and running away.

Verse 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."**

Notice the lack of faith in Saul's response.
He wants to know who is missing.
He wants to know who has caused this.
I think deep down Saul knows he should have done something.
And he is afraid that someone in the camp made this happen.
So, they count and find out his son is gone.
Just two men caused this victory.

Verse 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."**

Saul wants the ark to come.

You may remember that Israel brought the ark to battle once.

They did it when they should not have.

It seems like Saul is doing this.

He is bringing it with him.

And now he wants the ark to come.

He wants advice on what to do.

How different is this from what Jonathan did?

Saul does not appear to be asking in faith.

He is asking because he doesn't have any.

He wants miracles to help make it obvious.

Verse 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."**

And we see Saul talking to the priest.

He wants to ask God.

He is probably giving the priest some instructions to figure out what to do.

And while this is happening, the Philistines are panicking more and more.

God is very obviously answering the question.

Sometimes God does this to us.

He makes His answer obvious and we don't know what to do.

We pray about if we should tell someone who is lost about Christ.

So, Saul finally gets it.

And he tells the priest Never mind.

That is the right response.

But it also shows how casually Saul is treating God.

He is treating God like a token or a Magic Eightball.

Which is often how we can treat God too.

We act like He is an advice hotline instead of treating Him with reverence.

Verse 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."**

The people finally go into battle.

And when they take a step of faith, they see God is giving victory.

The Philistines are fighting among themselves.

God's word is obvious.

Verse 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."**

Even more Israelites come.

The faith spreads.

And those who ran away come back.

Those who have been hiding emerge from their caves.

And they join the battle God is bringing.

Verse 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."**

All the hidden come back out.

Those who had no faith now have faith.

Verse 23, **"So the Lord saved Israel that day. And the battle passed beyond Beth-aven."**

God is the one who saves.

This is not the story of Jonathan's faith.

This is the story of God who saves.

Of the God who delivers even when there are only two with faith against a multitude.

We all know the story of David versus a giant.

This is Jonathan versus an uncountable multitude.

It is a greater achievement of faith.

Actually, the more I look at this book.
Jonathan is the one I am the most impressed with.
He is the one who shows the most faith without failing or falling into sin.

But even then.
God is the one we praise.
He is the one we should be impressed by.
He can save with only a few.
He can save with only one.

And when we trust in God.
If we can believe in God like Jonathan, look at how it inspires others.
Jonathan's faith in God is used to bring the whole nation to battle.
It inspires his father despite his hesitency.
It inspires even those who had no faith previously.
They come and join in faith.

When we have faith, it inspires others.
The Christian life is never meant to be alone.
We need the body of Christ.
We need each other.
The church needs your faith.
It needs you to come and sing.

When someone comes to worship and trust even when they are facing cancer it encourages it.
When someone comes to share how God delivered them from addiction.
When someone whose womb is closed comes to sing how good God is.
When someone who is dying praises the Lord.
These are the things that inspire us.
The faith of other believers can spur us on.
They encourage us that God can save with only a few.
We should have this faith not just for our sake, but for others.
Because when we have and act out this faith, it blesses the whole church.

Nothing can hinder God from salvation.
And we see this most fully in Jesus.
Jesus saved us in the most hindered way possible.
And it could not stop Him from saving us.

The disciples and the Jews expected a grand salvation.
They wanted a massive army to defeat the Romans.
They wanted revolution and freedom.
But Jesus came born to a humble family.
God chose a young teenage girl.
Most of us would not trust her with our car keys and God entrusted her to raise the Messiah.
Jesus was willing to be born into a family that would always get side-eyes.
People would always make comments about his mother and his birth.
He came born in a manger and lived as a carpenter.
He did not come as the tallest or the most handsome.
He came, and we did not esteem him.
He came with not a single sword.
His army was made of women, the sick, the poor, and the outcasts.
He was opposed by the might of the Roman Empire.
All of hell and Satan himself tried to stop Jesus.
One of his disciples betrayed him and all the rest abandoned him.
He died surrounded by criminals naked and hung on a tree.
Yet, it is the meekness of Jesus that saved.
Jesus came to save through suffering and death.
He became a curse for us on the cross.
He triumphed through suffering and death.

And to found the church He sent the Holy Spirit.
Something that we cannot see, but can only feel.
And the Holy Spirit founded the church on twelve men no one wanted.
Men with little education or qualifications.
For close to 200 years all the greatest and most well-known leaders of the church were killed.

Christians were mocked as atheists who worshipped a dead god.
The church was only seen as a place for the weak.
Yet, the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church.
The greatest enemy of the church Paul became its greatest apostle.
And it spread all over the globe through every tribe, nation, and tongue.
With no great branding plan, or marketing, or innovation.
It spread through the power of the God.

Because nothing can hinder our God.
Nothing can stop Him from saving any who would come.
There is no one who can resist His power and might.
There is no one who sins too much or can run too far that He cannot bring them home to Himself.
There is no Christian too weak that God cannot use.
There are no too few Christians so that God cannot do a great work.
This is our God.
He could not be hindered by a thousand years of ungodly leaders.
He cannot be hindered by countless scandals and sins from those who claim His name.
No declining numbers or closed churches can stop the gospel.
Nothing can hinder our God.

Think on the end of the story.
At the end one empire will swallow the whole world and Babylon will return.
This empire will be opposed to God and the bride of Christ.
All the power of hell and death will come into the world to fight.
The antichrist and Satan himself will roam free.
And yet, the Lamb who was slain will conquer.
He will defeat sin and death with but a word from His mouth.
That is our God.
Have faith little ones.
That God can handle whatever you are facing.
Even death itself.