

# 1 SAMUEL 14 - BY MANY OR BY FEW

## Study 15

### FAITH CONTRASTED

1 Samuel 14 introduces us to one of the most beautiful characters of scripture, Jonathan the son of King Saul.

In all of the accounts that contain Jonathan, he seems to display the most faith and virtue. We know he must be a sinner, yet in his portrayal, we see a shining model of Christian manhood, faithful friendship, and devoted service to the Lord.

We often see the message of the Bible in comparing contrasting figures and events. The message of faithfulness is once again emphasised as we contrast Jonathan and Saul.

Saul here is faithless. In 1 Samuel 14:2-3 we see the rejected king, along with a dispirited army, and a rejected priest. Ahijah comes from the family line of Ichabod (“Glory Gone”). Bill Arnold captures the scene perfectly,

[Saul’s] own royal glory [had] gone, where else would we expect Saul to be than with a relative of “Glory gone”?

In contrast, Jonathan springs to faithful action (1 Samuel 14:1).

### Read 1 Samuel 14:1-3

#### QUESTIONS

1. What features of this passage stand out to you?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What contrasts do you see between Saul and Jonathan?

## FAITH DARING

Jonathan had a desire to do something. But he was separated from his enemy by treacherous terrain.



*The terrain of Micmash*

The names of the rocky crags, Bozez and Seneh, have an equivalent English translation in the words, “Slippery” and “Thorny.” Tim Chester picks up on the imagery,

“...these allusions picture Jonathan descending into the grave before ascending to bring victory to God’s people.”

Neither Saul, nor the Philistines were worthy of making this journey. But Jonathan viewed the battle from the perspective of faith, and said to his armour bearer, “nothing can hinder the LORD from saving by many or by few” (14:6). Jonathan was confident that the Lord could save with a mighty army, or no army at all. A lesson he would have learnt from the saving acts of God in history.

The application is direct. All things are possible for God! This isn’t careless optimism, faith can exist even when no reason for optimism exists. But note, Jonathan’s faith wasn’t presumptuous. True faith knows that God is infinitely capable, but also acknowledges that God is free to act as he pleases. Jonathan hasn’t read the divine script of history.

### READ 1 Samuel 14:4-7

#### QUESTIONS

1. What features of this passage stand out to you?
2. Can faith dictate to God? How would these verses define faith?

## JONATHAN'S RAID

Jonathan proposed a sign, to know whether God would have them continue or not. If the Philistines say “come up to us,” Jonathan would advance. Jonathan and his companion pop out from the rocks. The Philistines barely take these two men seriously and say “Come up to us and we’ll teach you a lesson” (12, NIV). Jonathan ignored the wisecrack, all he needed to hear was “Come up to us.” A parallel today may be praying for opportunities for witness or service, and jumping at the opportunity should something present itself, trusting that God has provided that opportunity.

Jonathan and his companion clambered up the steep slope... and hit the Philistines before they could call out to Dagon for help. Jonathan’s attack brought a general panic to the camp, and God reinforced that panic with an earthquake.

Faith can never be sure of the outcome, but it is always confident in whom we place our faith, it cries out “Father, I don’t know what you’re doing in this situation, but I know you, and I trust you.”

## READ 1 Samuel 14:8-15

### QUESTIONS

1. What features of this passage stand out to you?
2. Does faith in God mean that we will always be sure of the outcome of the events?

## FAITH KINDLED

Jonathan’s faith inspired the men of Israel to action (16) . This is what strong faith does!

The watchmen didn’t see Jonathan leaving, but the stampede of Philistines was too obvious not to miss. Saul demands a count of the camp to find out who’s missing (17), the count reveals that Jonathan and his armour bearer have gone.

In verse 18, Saul seems paralysed in knowing what to do, he calls for the Ark of the Covenant, but quickly rescinds the command. Gordon Keddie puts his finger on the problem,

“Saul gives us the impression that he felt he was supposed to be ‘religious’ and observe certain conventions at the appropriate times, but really had no deep convictions of his own. He used religion, as opposed to living a personal faith in the Lord.”

Jonathan on the other hand displayed spiritual virtue, his faith increased as the day progressed. Eventually, Saul’s confidence was also kindled, as he led the army against the Philistines (20).

May we not be Christians who are content with unenthusiastic faith.

### **READ 1 Samuel 14:16-23**

#### **QUESTIONS**

1. What features of this passage stand out to you?
2. Can you think of any Christians from history, that through faith, were made daring for God?