

## ***The Power of One*** ***1 Samuel 14:1-23***

It was a rugged, rocky world of crags and cliffs. Steep and stony, pinnacles and peaks were lion yellow and lion fierce.

The vast army of Philistia was still headquartered atop a high hill at Michmash. Far across a deep gorge, Saul's little army was camped on an opposing hill under a lone pomegranate tree near Gibeah.

***Saul was staying in the outskirts of Gibeah under the pomegranate tree which is in Migron. And the people who were with him were about six hundred men, Verse 2***

The six hundred soldiers who remained were the best and bravest. All the rest had deserted. Yes, those still with Saul didn't leave. But they were more than merely afraid.

Unarmed and outnumbered, they were so dark with despair, they were resigned to death and defeat. From the king to the camp cook, they were without hope.

They were a lot like some saints today. They were resigned to the harsh reality that defeat at the hands of the enemy was merely a matter of time. No, the church has not yet been overwhelmed by the decadence and despair, by the sin and sensuality of the world all around us. But, many of us sigh, it is merely a matter of time until we are.

However, we must never forget that God has always never worked His wonders through the many. Now as in Saul's day, Our Master moves through a faithful few, through a remnant.

As Israel's army prepared to battle Philistia, that remnant was reduced to one man. Only the king's son Jonathan was completely committed to God. So he is the one God used.

It makes no difference whether our world moves at the clop of donkey hooves or at the roar of jet engines. One thing remains true. Our God is searching for a remnant, for men and women in whom He can display the great and glorious power of His presence.

***..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. 2 Chronicles 16:9 (NKJV)***

Anyone in Saul's army could have been the man through whom God defeated Philistia. And any Christian today can be the one our Lord uses to defeat sin and Satan in our society. The door is wide open.

Our God invites each and every believer to be victorious.

### ***Victory's Foundation***

It seems sudden, almost upon an impulse. The king's son decided to do battle against the Philistines as an army of one.

***Now the day came that Jonathan, the son of Saul, said to the young man who was carrying his armor, "Come and let us cross over to the Philistines' garrison that is on the other side." But he did not tell his father. Verse 1***

Jonathan's decision was not made in a moment. While the rest of the army was trembling in their tents, Jonathan was praying. But he did not call the high priest to pray for him, as his father did.

Instead, he sought God's will and God's way on his own. And our Lord always responds to those who sincerely seek His face.

As Jonathan prayed, God's will slowly seeped into his mind. He was not to wait for his father to blow the trumpet. He was to set out and do battle on his own.

He did not pause to tell his father what he was going to do. He knew what the king would say. It was more than foolish; it was insane and suicidal to assail such a vast army all alone.

Neither did he seek counsel from the other soldiers. They had neither faith nor fortitude to offer him.

***And the people did not know that Jonathan had gone. Verse 3***

Jonathan decided to do battle against Israel's enemies based upon what he knew in his heart his God would have him do. He responded to God and to God alone.

And if we are to be victorious, that is our first lesson. We must spend precious time in prayer, seeking God's will. Victory does not come to the impulsive. It comes to those who are so close to God, they can hear the still small voice of His Spirit whispering deep inside them.

But that was not the only foundation for the victory Jonathan won. He said it best himself.

***Then Jonathan said to the young man who was carrying his armor, "Come and let us cross over to the garrison of these uncircumcised; perhaps the Lord will work for us, for the Lord is not restrained to save by many or by few." Verse 6***

The young prince not only knew God personally. He also knew what God's Word said about his Lord.

***One of your men puts to flight a thousand, for the Lord your God is He who fights for you, just as He promised you. Joshua 23:10***

No doubt the rest of Saul's soldiers also remembered Joshua's promise. And they probably believed it was true. But they never imagined the promise applied to them, that they could be that one through whom God moved so mightily that a thousand would flee in terror.

Never forget. It is not enough to know and believe God's powerful promises. We must also do what Jonathan did. We must not only believe they apply to us. We must dare to step out in faith and act upon them.

## ***Victory's Faith***

So in the gray light of dawn, Jonathan and his armor bearer slipped out of camp and climbed down the steep slope to the rocky gorge below. There, with stone cliffs towering high up on both sides of them, they followed the ravine's winding path toward the Philistines.

And as they did, Jonathan whispered to his armor bearer what God had impressed upon him as he prayed.

***Then Jonathan said, "Behold, we will cross over to the men and reveal ourselves to them. If they say to us, 'Wait until we come to you'; then we will stand in our place and not go up to them. But if they say, 'Come up to us,' then we will go up, for the Lord has given them into our hands; and this shall be the sign to us." Verses 8-10***

The young prince was not at all smug and sure. He knew God had promised to give him victory. And he knew he could claim that promise. Still, he did not say his Lord would surely give them victory. He simply said that perhaps God would work with and through and for them.

Just as victorious believers must today, Jonathan was walking step by step by faith. He started by believing God's promise. Then he stepped out on that promise and acted upon it.

Then he obeyed the sign he knew God had given him. He was to approach the enemy's outpost and stand out in the open where the guards could see him.

And if those soldiers came down after him, Jonathan would not scurry back to the safety of his own camp. He would stand fast and defend himself as best he could.

Of course, his obedience to God's will might come at the cost of his life. But then and now, believers cannot be victorious and desperately hang onto their own lives. We can only defeat the dark forces of the devil by daring to trust God with our very lives. ***...they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death. Revelation 12:11***

Meanwhile, Saul was cautious and careful. His primary concern was avoiding defeat, not winning a victory. So even when his scouts reported the enemy was scattering and retreating in all directions, the king called old Eli's great grandson, Abijah, and asked him to divine God's mind.

When the battle was all over, Saul wanted to be alive and well. But that was not his son's concern. Jonathan wanted to defeat His Lord's enemies. And it did not matter to him what the cost might be.

If we are to be victorious over the merciless enemy of our souls, we cannot be squeamish about the cost, either. Jesus warned us about that.

***He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal.  
John 12:25***

Jonathan is our model. He did not play it safe. Instead, he valued God's will more than he did his own life.

That is essential to being victorious over our eternal enemy. We must place our lives in the hands of our loving Lord. We cannot hold our lives as dear and still be victorious over the enemy.

When Jonathan finally did reach the base of the steep cliff where Philistine soldiers stood guard, he stepped out into the open.

***When both of them revealed themselves to the garrison of the Philistines, the Philistines said, "Behold, Hebrews are coming out of the holes where they have hidden themselves." Verse 11***

High on the cliff, the Philistines mocked and ridiculed the two Israelites below them. They knew most of God's people were hiding in caves and cellars. And they supposed Jonathan and his armor bearer were among them.

There are no enemy soldiers looming above us. But many times, we are ridiculed and mocked by our eternal adversary and his power over us. Our addictions mock us. And so do ugly attitudes, depression and despair, painful wounds and roots of bitterness burrowed deep within our hearts.

Then the Philistines did precisely what God had told Jonathan they would do. They challenged him to come up to them.

***So the men of the garrison hailed Jonathan and his armor bearer and said, "Come up to us and we will tell you something." And Jonathan said to his armor bearer, "Come up after me, for the Lord has given them into the hands of Israel." Verse 12***

That was the sign the young prince was waiting for. Before, he was not so sure what God would do. *Perhaps* He would work for them.

Now Jonathan was sure. God had given him the sign. If the enemy called him to come up to them, the Lord would surely fight for him.

So the young prince began to clamber up the cliff. And when he reached the top, he found that God was faithful to His promise.

***Then Jonathan climbed up on his hands and feet, with his armor bearer behind him; and they fell before Jonathan, and his armor bearer put some to death after him. That first slaughter which Jonathan and his armor bearer made was about twenty men within about half a furrow in an acre of land. Verses 13-14***

The enemy soldiers fled in a straight line, desperately trying to reach their army's main base. And Jonathan pursued them, slaying twenty of them. Those soldiers vastly outnumbered the king's son. But God was fighting for Jonathan. And they could not stand before His great power.

We must never forget that, because Jesus bled and died for us and because He was raised up from among the dead, He has unlimited and unchallenged power and authority.

***All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Matthew 28:18***

And when we trust in Christ with all our hearts, He fills us with His power over the enemy of our souls.

***Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, Luke 10:19***

We who trust in Jesus never need to cower in fear. Neither do we need to be intimidated that our enemy proudly mocks us as powerless and petrified of sin's sway over us.

We can be victorious. Indeed, our Savior expects us to overcome our enemy. That is why He has granted us all His eternal power and authority.

But we must leave our fears behind just as Jonathan left his father's camp behind. We must step out in faith upon God's promises.

Otherwise, we will live and die in fear and failure.

## ***Victory's Fruits***

The soldiers who did manage to escape Jonathan's sword ran in terror back to their army's home base. And like a plague, the terror that beat within them infected the entire army.

***And there was a trembling in the camp, in the field, and among all the people. Even the garrison and the raiders trembled, and the earth quaked so that it became a great trembling. Verse 15***

High on a hill nearby, Saul's scouts saw the confusion in the enemy camp and relayed the news back to the king.

***Now Saul's watchmen in Gibeah of Benjamin looked, and behold, the multitude melted away; and they went here and there. Verse 16***

Saul did not know what was happening. But he wondered if some of his men had begun the battle on their own. So he sounded assembly.

He was astounded that only his son and an armor bearer were absent. So he called Eli's empty great-grandson and asked him to seek God's face.

But the confusion among the Philistines grew and grew. In their desperation to flee, soldiers swung their swords at anyone in their way. The Israelites had no weapons. But they did not need them. The enemy began to hack away at one another.

***While Saul talked to the priest, the commotion in the camp of the Philistines continued and increased; so Saul said to the priest, "Withdraw your hand." Then Saul and all the people who were with him rallied and came to the battle; and behold, every man's sword was against his fellow, and there was very great confusion. Verses 19-20***

Suddenly, Saul found the courage to do battle with the enemy. Still outnumbered and unarmed, his soldiers ran to join the conflict.

Many Christians are a lot like Saul's army. They are dressed for battle and have answered the call to battle. But they linger back in fear of defeat. So saints are silent at school, at work and even in their own homes.

What they need is what the army of Israel needed. They needed to see one man of God step out in faith on the Lord's promises. They needed to see that victory was possible, that God's promises are true and He really does pour His power into those who trust in Him.

But Saul's soldiers were not the only ones who suddenly found the courage to face the enemy.

***Now the Hebrews who were with the Philistines previously, who went up with them all around in the camp, even they also turned to be with the Israelites who were with Saul and Jonathan. Verse 21***

It is truly amazing. But some of God's people were numbered among the enemy army. Some of them were slaves, taken captive by Philistine raiders. Others were volunteers who willingly served the enemy of their own people.

But when they saw God fighting for Israel, they broke the bonds of their slavery and service to Philistia. And they too joined Jonathan.

Many people today are a lot like them. Some have been so enslaved by sin they have abandoned God's people.

Others have foolishly chosen to follow the enemy of their souls and have sold themselves in sin as Satan's servants. Perhaps they remember the promises they once trusted. But they do not believe they apply to them.

They too need to see one victorious saint stand boldly for Jesus Christ. They need to be rallied by sight of a Christian who cares only for Christ and will trust His promises at all costs.

One last group also joined the fight. Deep in the caves and crevices where they hid, other Israelites heard the noise of battle.

***When all the men of Israel who had hidden themselves in the hill country of Ephraim heard that the Philistines had fled, even they also pursued them closely in the battle. Verse 22***

Some of them were men who had refused to answer the call to arms. They fled their homes and hid themselves in terror. Others were deserters who had not joined the Philistines. But they had slipped away by night and hid until they felt they might be safe.

They too were suddenly filled with courage and joined the fight. And all because one man named Jonathan dared to trust God and step out in faith on His promises.

Of course, Jonathan did not climb up the cliff to change the lives of his countrymen. He scaled the cliff and went to battle to defeat his enemies.

In the same way, men and women today do not trust in Jesus with a courageous commitment to be a

model of victorious faith for others who have lived in defeat.

Each child of God who trusts in God's Word and dares to live a complete commitment does so to defeat his own addictions and attitudes, his own sin, shame and slavery.

Infecting and inspiring others was a wonderful side effect of Jonathan's bold faith. And when even one among us dares to serve and stand for the Savior as he did, the same result will follow. Others will be emboldened by our example. And they too will be freed from their fears.

The only issue that remains is a question. It is one each of us must answer for himself or herself. Will we be the one who steps out for Jesus Christ?

Or will we continue to cower in fear?