

### Jonathon's Victory Over the Philistines

#### 1 Samuel 14:1-23

1 Samuel 14:1-23 - *"Now it happened one day that Jonathan the son of Saul said to the young man who bore his armor, "Come, let us go over to the Philistines' garrison that is on the other side." But he did not tell his father. 2 And Saul was sitting in the outskirts of Gibeah under a pomegranate tree which is in Migron. The people who were with him were about six hundred men. 3 Ahijah the son of Ahitub, Ichabod's brother, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eli, the LORD's priest in Shiloh, was wearing an ephod. But the people did not know that Jonathan had gone. 4 Between the passes, by which Jonathan sought to go over to the Philistines' garrison, there was a sharp rock on one side and a sharp rock on the other side. And the name of one was Bozez, and the name of the other Seneh. 5 The front of one faced northward opposite Michmash, and the other southward opposite Gibeah.*

*6 Then Jonathan said to the young man who bore 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 restrains the LORD from saving by many or by few." 7 So his armor bearer said to him, "Do all that is in your heart. Go then; here I am with you, according to your heart." 8 Then Jonathan said, "Very well, let us cross over to these men, and we will show ourselves to them. 9 If they say thus to us, 'Wait until we come to you,' then we will stand still in our place and not go up to them. 10 But if they say thus, 'Come up to us,' then we will go up. For the LORD has delivered them into our hand, and this will be a sign to us."*

*11 So both of them showed themselves to the garrison of the Philistines. And the Philistines said, "Look, the Hebrews are coming out of the holes where they have hidden." 12 Then the men of the garrison called to Jonathan and his armor bearer, and said, "Come up to us, and we will show you something." Jonathan said to his armor bearer, "Come up after me, for the LORD has delivered them into the hand of Israel." 13 And Jonathan climbed up on his hands and knees with his armor bearer after him; and they fell before Jonathan. And as he came after him, his armor bearer killed them. 14 That first slaughter which Jonathan and his armor bearer made was about twenty men within about half an acre of land. 15 And there was trembling in the camp, in the field, and among all the people. The garrison and the raiders also trembled; and the earth quaked, so that it was a very great trembling. 16 Now the watchmen of Saul in Gibeah of Benjamin looked, and there was the multitude, melting away; and they went here and there. 17 Then Saul said to the people who were with him, "Now call the roll and see who has gone from us." And when they had called the roll, surprisingly, Jonathan and his armor bearer were not there. 18 And Saul said to Ahijah, "Bring the ark of God here" (for at that time the ark of God was with the children of Israel).*

*19 Now it happened, while Saul talked to the priest, that the noise which was in the camp of the Philistines continued to increase; so Saul said to the priest, "Withdraw your hand." 20 Then Saul and all the people who were with him assembled, and they went to the battle; and indeed every man's sword was against his neighbor, and there was very great confusion.*

*21 Moreover the Hebrews who were with the Philistines before that time, who went up with them into the camp from the surrounding country, they also joined the Israelites who were with Saul and Jonathan. 22 Likewise all the men of Israel*

who had hidden in the mountains of Ephraim, when they heard that the Philistines fled, they also followed hard after them in the battle. <sup>23</sup> So the LORD saved Israel that day, and the battle shifted to Beth Aven.”

## Background Notes

After the event of 1 Samuel 13, where the prophet Samuel had to rebuke King Saul for his disobedience, Samuel returned from Gilgal in the Jordan Valley to Gibeah, which was in hill country of Benjamin. Gibeah was a few miles north of Jerusalem, and King Saul made this town his capital in Israel. (Jerusalem remained in the hands of the Jebusites until David conquered it and made it the capital of Israel.) 1 Samuel 13 says that Saul and his men were camped in Geba and the Philistines were camped at Michmash. Geba was a few miles northeast of Gibeah, and Michmash was on the other side a steep valley northeast of Geba. The Philistines were sending out raiding parties in all directions from Michmash, attacking the towns and villages of Israel. *“Then raiders came out of the camp of the Philistines in three companies. One company turned onto the road to Ophrah, to the land of Shual, another company turned to the road to Beth Horon, and another company turned to the road of the border that overlooks the Valley of Zeboim toward the wilderness.”*

Saul seemed helpless, and afraid to do anything about these raids. But Saul’s son Jonathan didn’t run scared, and he didn’t stand idly by while the Philistines attacked God’s people. Remember, in 1 Samuel 13 Jonathan and his men attacked and overran the Philistine garrison at Geba, the very place that Israel was now camped. Now in 1 Samuel 14, Jonathan and his armor bearer stepped out in faith, by themselves, with the Lord’s help, to win another significant battle over the Philistines. We don’t know how old Jonathan was at this point -- maybe he was still a teenager. In any case, this would be like a couple of high school or college-age athletes taking on a big bunch of professional athletes -- and defeating them!

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. God can bring victory against all odds.

*“Then Jonathan said to the young man who bore his armor, “Come, let us go over... it may be that the LORD will work for us. For nothing restrains the LORD from saving by many or by few” (v6).* A contemporary translation of what Jonathan said here would be, “One + God is a majority!”

Notice that Jonathan and his armor bearer didn’t step out in blind faith, throwing common sense to the wind. No. First of all, they knew their biblical history. When they said, “God can save by many or by few,” they were remembering events in Israel’s history when God gave his people victory against great odds. No doubt they knew about events like Ehud’s over the Moabites and Gideon’s victory over the Midianites, when God gave His people victory in spite of overwhelming odds. Second, Jonathan and his armor bearer let God guide them by giving them a sign. *“But if they say thus, ‘Come up to us,’ then we will go up. For the LORD has delivered them into our hand, and this will be a sign to us” (v10).* If the Philistines invited them to come across the steep valley, then Jonathan and his armor bearer would know that God was directing

them to move out by faith. And so, God gave Jonathan and his armor bearer a victory over the Philistines -- in spite of the odds!

I remember hiking around the area of Michmash when I was studying in the Holy Land, and I think I found the place of the two crags or sharp rocks where Jonathan and his armor bearer crawled up on their hands and knees – but I can't be sure that I found the exact location! In any case, God gave Jonathan and his armor bearer victory against great odds.

God can give believers great victory in spiritual warfare today. "One + God" is still a majority! "*God can save by many or by few.*" Think of what God accomplished through a few individuals at the time of the Reformation. Think of what God accomplished in Africa through one man, David Livingstone, and in China through one man, Hudson Taylor. Think of what God can do on your campus or your school district through a small group of committed Christians! God can bring victory against all odds!

## **2. God can cause confusion in the enemy camp.**

*"And there was trembling in the camp, in the field, and among all the people. The garrison and the raiders also trembled; and the earth quaked, so that it was a very great trembling. Now the watchmen of Saul in Gibeah of Benjamin looked, and there was the multitude, melting away; and they went here and there" (v15-16).* And verse 20, *"Then Saul and all the people who were with him assembled, and they went to the battle; and indeed every man's sword was against his neighbor, and there was very great confusion."* God sent along a great earthquake to add to the enemy's confusion, so that the enemy scattered.

The confusion was so great in the enemy camp that Saul told Ahijah, the priest, not to bother consulting the Urim and Thummim, because it was obvious that God had spoken -- at least that is the way I interpret verse 19. God was directing Israel to attack the Philistines. *"Now it happened, while Saul talked to the priest, that the noise which was in the camp of the Philistines continued to increase; so Saul said to the priest, "Withdraw your hand" (v19).* In any case, the Lord delivered Israel that day, and He gave them a great victory over the Philistines.

Even the Hebrew mercenaries, who had been wrongly fighting for the Philistines, turned back and fought for Israel: *"Moreover the Hebrews who were with the Philistines before that time, who went up with them into the camp from the surrounding country, they also joined the Israelites who were with Saul and Jonathan."* And all the fearful men who had been hiding out in the mountains came out of their caves and joined those pursuing the Philistines: *"Likewise all the men of Israel who had hidden in the mountains of Ephraim, when they heard that the Philistines fled, they also followed hard after them in the battle."* So, the Lord saved Israel that day, and the battle shifted to Beth Aven.

The Lord waited for someone to step out in faith, and then He fought for Israel. And just as God caused confusion in the enemy camp in that day, so He can cause confusion in the enemy camp in our day as well. God can cause confusion in the enemy camp of those who would move this country away from biblical moral standards. God answers the prayers of His people! God can cause confusion in the enemy camp.

## **Practical Application**

### **Thank the Lord for the “armor bearers” He provides!**

*“So his armor bearer said to him, “Do all that is in your heart. Go then; here I am with you, according to your heart” (v7).* What a great blessing for Jonathan, that he had such a willing and courageous armor bearer! Do you think that this was just coincidence, or did God provide just the right man to join and support Jonathan? This was not coincidence! God provided just the right armor bearer for Jonathan.

In the same way, God provides armor bearers today. If you’re a committed Christian, and you’re involved in Christian service and fighting the good fight, you can be sure that the Lord will provide just the right armor bearers for you. These modern-day armor bearers will support you, and encourage you, and fight the good fight alongside you. I’m so thankful for the armor bearers the Lord has sent along our way to help us in Growing Christian Ministries. What an encouragement and support they are to us!

Thank the Lord for the armor bearers He provides!