

1 Samuel Chapter 14 Commentary

1Sa 14:1 ¶ "Now it came to pass upon a day, that Jonathan the son of Saul said unto the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over to the Philistines' garrison, that is on the other side. But he told not his father. 2 And Saul tarried in the uttermost part of Gibeath under a pomegranate tree which is in Migron: and the people that were with him were about six hundred men; 3 And Ahiah, the son of Ahitub, Ichabod's brother, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eli, the LORD'S priest in Shiloh, wearing an ephod. And the people knew not that Jonathan was gone. 4 And between the passages, by which Jonathan sought to go over unto the Philistines' garrison, there was a sharp rock on the one side, and a sharp rock on the other side: and the name of the one was Bozez, and the name of the other Seneh. 5 The forefront of the one was situate northward over against Michmash, and the other southward over against Gibeath."

Jonathan and his armor bearer leave camp and go over to where the Philistines are camped. They do not go by the road but up the side of the mountain, which separated the Philistines and Saul and his men. They are between passages and their way is between two rocks, which are named: Bozez which means *shining, or to be bleached white*: and Seneh means *a thorn or to prick*. This tells us that Jonathan is going the way the Lord is directing him, the light of God is shining in him, and God is going to use him to be a thorn and prick the Philistines.

Jonathan, faced with what would seem to be insurmountable odds, is being used of God to bring a victory over the Philistines, which gives us a prophetic picture of how Jesus, the shining light, came to earth and, faced with what would seem to be insurmountable odds, wrought victory over death, hell, and the grave, for all of God's people.

6 "And Jonathan said to the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the LORD will work for us: for there is no restraint to the LORD to save by many or by few. 7 And his armourbearer said unto him, Do all that is in thine heart: turn thee; behold, I am with thee according to thy heart. 8 Then said Jonathan, Behold, we will pass over unto these men, and we will discover ourselves unto them. 9 If they say thus unto us, Tarry until we come to you; then we will stand still in our place, and will not go up unto them. 10 But if they say thus, Come up unto us; then we will go up: for the LORD hath delivered them into our hand: and this shall be a sign unto us. 11 And both of them discovered themselves unto the garrison of the Philistines: and the Philistines said, Behold, the Hebrews come forth out of the holes where they had hid themselves. 12 And the men of the garrison answered Jonathan and his armourbearer, and said, Come up to us, and we will shew you a thing. And Jonathan said unto his armourbearer, Come up after me: for the LORD hath delivered them into the hand of Israel."

Jonathan tells his armor bearer, let us reveal ourselves to the Philistines and see what their response is, which will tell us what we should do. Jesus exposed himself to those who were fighting against him.

Jonathan has a faithful armor bearer who tells him: do all that is in thine heart after Jonathan tells him that God can save by few or many. The armor bearer is figurative of the Holy Spirit, which Jesus has sent to dwell in the hearts of his people. The Holy Spirit in us, like Jonathan's armor bearer, can be trusted fully in what Jesus directs us to do.

Jonathan lays out the plan of action and they show themselves to the Philistines. The Philistines give the right answer for Jonathan, and his armor bearer, to go over believing that God has delivered the Philistines to them. Did you notice that Jonathan used the past tense: "**for the LORD hath delivered them into the hand of Israel.**" Jonathan understood, by the light of the Holy Spirit, that God was going to win the battle against the Philistines. We, as born-again children of God, can express the war of our salvation won in the past tense, because of the finished work of Jesus Christ. Though we continue in the battle on earth the eternal victory is already won.

Jonathan is exercising total faith in God, that God will deliver his people from the Philistines. Jesus exercised total faith in God the Father and came to earth to do God's will. Jesus even accepted death on the cross, for the remission of our sins, and trusted fully that God the Father would resurrect him from the dead, and he would return to his rightful place on the throne of God in heaven. When we are faced with difficulties in life, and it looks like our enemies are going to overwhelm us, we should exercise total faith in God. We remember in

scripture we are commanded not to doubt, seen in: **1Ti 2:8 "I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting."** When we pray, in accordance with the will of God and our true needs, we are not to doubt that God will perform.

"And Jonathan said unto his armourbearer, Come up after me: for the LORD hath delivered them into the hand of Israel." Do you see the age of salvation by grace being ushered in? Jesus established the church and then sent his disciples forth, to follow the example he had set before them. Jesus overcame all obstacles and is still overcoming the Philistines, a picture of the sin nature of mankind. Every time a sinner is born again, who professes faith in the finished work of Jesus, and follows Jesus in the way he established, the Philistines are overthrown. Every child of God is engaged in the continual warfare against sin, just as Jesus was. This is why we are commanded to put on the whole armor of God, which demonstrates that we are Christians, and that we are followers of Christ.

13 "And Jonathan climbed up upon his hands and upon his feet, and his armourbearer after him: and they fell before Jonathan; and his armourbearer slew after him. 14 And that first slaughter, which Jonathan and his armourbearer made, was about twenty men, within as it were an half acre of land, which a yoke of oxen might plow. 15 And there was trembling in the host, in the field, and among all the people: the garrison, and the spoilers, they also trembled, and the earth quaked: so it was a very great trembling. 16 ¶ And the watchmen of Saul in Gibeah of Benjamin looked; and, behold, the multitude melted away, and they went on beating down one another."

The reason we said earlier that they did not take the road is seen here. They had to climb to get to the Philistines and they had to expose themselves to the Philistines. Had they gone by the road the watchers would have announced their coming. The war of the eternal salvation of God's people was won on the cross and we see it as the upward way. Christ on the cross was above the earth. Christ rose from the tomb and went up to the eternal heaven. Jonathan put the Philistines out of action and his armor bearer slew them. They kill about twenty Philistines, under God's care and strength in them. Then, God moved upon the Philistines, who were consumed with great fear and began to tremble. This encompassed the whole of the Philistine army, even the spoilers that had been sent out. Then the earth itself began to tremble, and the Philistines begin to run away and to kill one another. The watchmen of Saul saw what was going on and reported to Saul.

We interject here, though the scripture does not say this except by inference, that the earth trembled under the feet of the Philistines and not the Israelites. The watchmen of Israel looked and saw, they did not feel the earth trembling. As Jesus, and Peter, walked on water in the stormy sea, I believe that Jonathan, his armor bearer, and Israel all walked on solid ground. Faithful children of God also walk on solid ground.

There is a prophetic picture here if God will bless me to set it forth. Remember, first, the circumstances of Israel's present condition. They are under the headship of the Philistines and have been for a long time. This is the same condition of every child of God before the new birth. They are all under the bondage of sin and Satan. Israel desires to be freed from this bondage of the Philistines. With the new birth, the child of God desires to be freed from the bondage of their flesh nature.

Jonathan sets the battle in motion by slaying several Philistines. Jesus, when present upon the earth, slew a few of the evil spirits and devils that God's people face here in time by casting them out of his chosen people. Jonathan sets in motion the battle that will free Israel from the bondage of the Philistines. Jesus, through his life, death, burial, and resurrection, set in motion the battle, which has overcome the whole of the armies of the devil, and gives each heir of grace freedom from their sinful flesh nature. The Philistines of our lives have already fallen before Jesus. Jonathan's armor bearer slew the Philistines after they fell before Jonathan. We can slay the temptations of sin, by the power of the Holy Spirit, when they have fallen before us by the power of Jesus Christ.

How can we know this is true? Do you remember the man who was possessed with the legion of devils and what happened? Jesus cast forth the legion of devils, they went into the swine, and then they drowned themselves in the sea. What then happened to the man out of whom the legion of devils was cast forth? We find him clothed and in his right mind at the feet of Jesus. This is what happens when a dead and alienated sinner is born again. The continuing warfare against sin is pictured for us in the lives of Jonathan and his armor bearer. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for going before us, winning the war, and providing a pathway of salvation for us to follow you.

Did you notice the trembling that came upon the Philistines, and the ground upon which they trod? "**the multitude melted away**," Melted has the definition of **to become soft, or to be consumed with fear**. This is where we see God working, even in this age of salvation by grace, in making the very devils that tempt us tremble when we are filled with the Word of God, and when we are exercising faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ, seen in: **Jas 2:19 "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble."** Remember, as the devils believe and tremble at the name of Jesus and the Word of God. The ground upon which they stand is just as unstable as they are, and it will eventually be destroyed at the end of time. They have no sure foundation as the child of God does. The child of God has the promise of eternal security in Christ, and the promise of a new, eternal, earth, which can never be shaken.

17 "Then said Saul unto the people that were with him, Number now, and see who is gone from us. And when they had numbered, behold, Jonathan and his armourbearer were not there. 18 And Saul said unto Ahiah, Bring hither the ark of God. For the ark of God was at that time with the children of Israel. 19 And it came to pass, while Saul talked unto the priest, that the noise that was in the host of the Philistines went on and increased: and Saul said unto the priest, Withdraw thine hand."

Saul's watchmen see what is going on and report it to Saul. Notice there is no mention of earth trembling here. Saul takes count and discovers that Jonathan and his armor bearer are not in camp. Now, Saul knows that Jonathan is up to something, and it is obvious that God has moved upon the Philistines.

Saul calls for the priest to inquire of God as to what to do, which is proper as seen in: **Nu 27:21 "And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask counsel for him after the judgment of Urim before the LORD: at his word shall they go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he, and all the children of Israel with him, even all the congregation."** This is when Joshua was anointed to be the leader of Israel in Moses's stead. God directed Joshua to inquire of God before he moved in any direction, which is a good lesson for us today.

However, before the priest can complete the preparations to inquire of God, Saul tells him to stop. Why? Because the noise of the Philistines killing one another has become louder and louder, and Saul understands that it is a time for action, which is why he told the priest to "**Withdraw thine hand**." There are two perspectives to be seen in this action. The first is that Saul shows how impatient he is by not waiting upon God. He has already demonstrated this by not waiting on Samuel. Surely, it would not have done any harm to wait for the Lord's instruction. Waiting for the Lord to instruct may have affected the soundness of the defeat and the number of the Philistines slain. It may have stayed Saul from giving the foolish order to not eat that day.

The second is: It is easy to stop and throw stones at Saul for not waiting for the Lord to answer, however, as we consider the context of the scene, we see it is a time for action. God has gone before Israel and discomfited the Philistines, and now it is time to follow and smite the enemies of Israel.

This same thing is true in our own lives as Christians. Jesus Christ has gone before us, and Jesus has put fear and trembling in the hearts and minds of our enemies. When God gives us the leading to action, such as moving one to join the church, or visit a fellow Christian who is struggling, or whatever the need may be: it is not time to dally when we know what God wants us to do. It is a time for action. A time to make full proof of the ministry God has given each Christian.

20 "And Saul and all the people that were with him assembled themselves, and they came to the battle: and, behold, every man's sword was against his fellow, and there was a very great discomfiture. 21 Moreover the Hebrews that were with the Philistines before that time, which went up with them into the camp from the country round about, even they also turned to be with the Israelites that were with Saul and Jonathan. 22 Likewise all the men of Israel which had hid themselves in mount Ephraim, when they heard that the Philistines fled, even they also followed hard after them in the battle. 23 So the LORD saved Israel that day: and the battle passed over unto Bethaven."

Saul and his six hundred men go forth to the battle. There is not much to do because God is causing the Philistines to slay one another. Seeing the battle going well for Israel, all those who had gone into hiding came forth and joined the battle. The Israelites who were still serving the Philistines also rose against the Philistines. These all rallied to Saul and his men.

The lesson for us is: When we are doing God's will, standing firm in Jesus Christ, and walking in faithfulness to God, our action should bring comfort to, and strengthen our fellow Christians, as seen in: **Eph 4:13-16; 13 "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: 14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; 15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: 16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."**

Notice, God saved Israel that day. We are reminded here: though God has told Saul he has withdrawn the kingdom from him to give to another, yet God is going to fulfill his word to use Saul to deliver Israel, seen in: **1Sa 9:16; 15 "Now the LORD had told Samuel in his ear a day before Saul came, saying, 16 Tomorrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him to be captain over my people Israel, that he may save my people out of the hand of the Philistines: for I have looked upon my people, because their cry is come unto me."**

It is reminder: God can still use a person who is in rebellion against him. Just because a person is rebelling against God, it does not mean that person has more power than God. God will always fulfill his promises and accomplish his sovereign will, in heaven and upon the earth.

A lesson for us: Remember the context of the scripture: Israel is under the rule of the Philistines and has incited rebellion against them. They are outnumbered by an innumerable host of enemies. Jonathan, divinely led by God, has begun the battle, and God has moved in and set upon the Philistines. We see that the action set in motion by Jonathan has resulted in a time, for Israel to gather and fight against their enemies, whom God has already discomfited. This is not a time to be delaying, but a time of action.

Now apply this scene to your own life as a Christian. Jesus has set the battle in motion, and has, by his own power, discomfited the enemies in our lives. When born again it is a time for action, not for delaying. We should assemble ourselves with the Church of Salvation by the Grace of God, by making our public profession of faith in Christ Jesus and being baptized, taking up our cross, and following Jesus in the way.

What a great picture of the church and its place in this world of sin. Did you notice that all of Israel is now working together? Did you notice they left their former places and came together as one? A reminder to us, the battle to overcome sin is already going on, and we are to leave our fears of natural death and our hiding places, and join the battle, knowing that we are sure to overcome because of the finished work of Jesus Christ. A reminder also, we should forget the things which separate us from fellowship with other Christians. The church, God's chosen nation of people on earth, is one united body of people.

24 ¶ "And the men of Israel were distressed that day: for Saul had adjured the people, saying, Cursed be the man that eateth any food until evening, that I may be avenged on mine enemies. So none of the people tasted any food. 25 And all they of the land came to a wood; and there was honey upon the ground. 26 And when the people were come into the wood, behold, the honey dropped; but no man put his hand to his mouth: for the people feared the oath. 27 But Jonathan heard not when his father charged the people with the oath: wherefore he put forth the end of the rod that was in his hand, and dipped it in an honeycomb, and put his hand to his mouth; and his eyes were enlightened."

Adjure means *to utter a curse*. This is why we say it may have been best for Saul to wait for word from God before going to battle. Saul has given an unreasonable and foolish order to not eat.

Saul declares: "**that I may be avenged on mine enemies.**" Saul acts like the Philistines are his personal enemies and not Israel's enemies. He is expanding his ego and putting himself above Israel. He does not even acknowledge that Jonathan and his armor bearer are the ones leading the battle. He does not mention that God has won the battle for them.

A lesson for us: do not put obstacles in the path of God's people. God has given all his chosen people salvation and eternal life, which comes from the same source, Jesus, the Christ.

Jonathan ate of the honey, which God had provided. He is enlightened, and he is strengthened in the Lord. We should never forbid any of God's people from eating of God's provisions, which will enlighten and strengthen them, in their Christian walk, in life.

Notice, this distress of Israel is from within the camp of Israel, not from their enemies. Notice, the cause comes from the earthly king that Israel desired. How often do we draw lines in the sand, and cause ourselves much distress in our Christian lives by acting like Pharisees, Scribes, and Sadducees. We misinterpret scriptures, and we avoid fellowship with one another over things that amount to nothing. We sometimes become egotistical, and we bar fellowship because: They are of a different denomination and do not believe exactly like I do; their practice of worship is different than ours, etc. This is distress, in the life of a Christian, that comes from within, when we separate ourselves from sweet fellowship with God's people.

I am not saying that we should be partakers of sinfulness, for we should not do that. I am saying: we should take the time to know the heart of our fellow sharers in the salvation of God and not disallow ourselves a blessing from God.

28 "Then answered one of the people, and said, Thy father straitly charged the people with an oath, saying, Cursed be the man that eateth any food this day. And the people were faint. 29 Then said Jonathan, My father hath troubled the land: see, I pray you, how mine eyes have been enlightened, because I tasted a little of this honey. 30 How much more, if haply the people had eaten freely today of the spoil of their enemies which they found? for had there not been now a much greater slaughter among the Philistines?"

The people tell Jonathan of Saul's orders. Jonathan declares that his father has given a foolish order. After all, God has provided the honey for Israel, but King Saul has put an obstacle in the way of partaking of it and thereby put a stumbling block in the way of Israel, who eating of God's provision would have been enlightened, and strengthened, which would have generated greater slaughter of their enemies.

Healthy warriors must maintain a healthy diet, and eat when they are hungry, or their strength will fail them, and they will become less useful, or completely useless. This is true in our Christian warfare, in the struggles of life. We need to feed upon the bread of life, and drink from the fountain of the living waters, often, to sustain our lives in Christ. This is why God has provided the written word, the King James bible, which is the testimony of Jesus, to be read and studied. This is why God's ministers preach the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Remember, Jonathan and his armor bearer are leading the battle, Saul and the armies of Israel are following them. We must remember; the Captain of the armies of the living God is Jesus Christ, who has gone before us and discomfited our enemies, as seen in songs we sing. Here is part of one song in the Lloyd Hymnal:

387 7s & 6s.

Longing for and encouraging others in the way to heaven.

- 1 O WHEN shall I see Jesus, And reign with him above, And drink the flowing fountain Of everlasting love?
When shall I be delivered From this vain world of sin? And with my blessed Jesus Drink endless pleasures in?**
- 2 But now I am a soldier; My Captain's gone before; Has given me my orders, And tells me not to fear:
For since he's gained the victory, It to his own he'll give, And all his valiant soldiers Eternally shall live.**

31 "And they smote the Philistines that day from Michmash to Aijalon: and the people were very faint. 32 And the people flew upon the spoil, and took sheep, and oxen, and calves, and slew them on the ground: and the people did eat them with the blood. 33 Then they told Saul, saying, Behold, the people sin against the LORD, in that they eat with the blood. And he said, Ye have transgressed: roll a great stone unto me this day. 34 And Saul said, Disperse yourselves among the people, and say unto them, Bring me hither every man his ox, and every man his sheep, and slay them here, and eat; and sin not against the LORD in eating with the blood. And all the people brought every man his ox with him that night, and slew them there."

Israel is forbidden, by the law, to eat flesh with the blood in it. The Israelites are so faint, from following Saul's foolish order of not eating, that they disregard the law of God and eat the flesh raw. When children of God are not following "**thus saith the Lord**," they are following the foolish desires of the flesh nature, they will partake of unclean things, and thus transgress the commandments of God.

Saul does not acknowledge that he has given a foolish order to not eat, which is the cause of the problem. Saul reminds Israel they are not to eat the blood, and then usurps the priest office, by telling them: bring your

food to me to be slaughtered, which gives the appearance of a priest sacrificing to God. This was a duty of the priesthood, not the king. This demonstrates how we will perform as Christians if we are in rebellion against God, walking, talking, and living according to our flesh nature.

35 "And Saul built an altar unto the LORD: the same was the first altar that he built unto the LORD. 36 ¶ And Saul said, Let us go down after the Philistines by night, and spoil them until the morning light, and let us not leave a man of them. And they said, Do whatsoever seemeth good unto thee. Then said the priest, Let us draw near hither unto God. 37 And Saul asked counsel of God, Shall I go down after the Philistines? wilt thou deliver them into the hand of Israel? But he answered him not that day. 38 And Saul said, Draw ye near hither, all the chief of the people: and know and see wherein this sin hath been this day. 39 For, as the LORD liveth, which saveth Israel, though it be in Jonathan my son, he shall surely die. But there was not a man among all the people that answered him. 40 Then said he unto all Israel, Be ye on one side, and I and Jonathan my son will be on the other side. And the people said unto Saul, Do what seemeth good unto thee. 41 Therefore Saul said unto the LORD God of Israel, Give a perfect lot. And Saul and Jonathan were taken: but the people escaped. 42 And Saul said, Cast lots between me and Jonathan my son. And Jonathan was taken. 43 Then Saul said to Jonathan, Tell me what thou hast done. And Jonathan told him, and said, I did but taste a little honey with the end of the rod that was in mine hand, and, lo, I must die. 44 And Saul answered, God do so and more also: for thou shalt surely die, Jonathan."

Saul builds an altar to the Lord and says, let us go by night and complete the slaying of the Philistines. Again, Saul does not even think of asking God what to do. The priest intervenes and says, let us ask of God what to do. God does not answer Saul that day. Saul perceives that God is not answering because of some sin among the people. He declares that even if it is his son, he will slay him. They cast lots and Jonathan is taken. Saul asks; and Jonathan tells Saul he ate some of the honey and asks if he must thus die. Saul declares that he will kill Jonathan. Saul is attempting to demonstrate that he is a king that keeps his word.

To Saul's credit, he does acknowledge that it is the Lord that saves Israel.

45 "And the people said unto Saul, Shall Jonathan die, who hath wrought this great salvation in Israel? God forbid: as the LORD liveth, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground; for he hath wrought with God this day. So the people rescued Jonathan, that he died not. 46 Then Saul went up from following the Philistines: and the Philistines went to their own place."

The people rescue Jonathan from Saul declaring that it is even more foolish to kill the man, whom God used to bring about the deliverance from the Philistines, than the foolish order to not eat. Because the people have taken a stand against Saul, Saul goes home and leaves off pursuing the Philistines, who also go home.

A lesson for us: we should always stand united in Christ. We should never desire our own glory, but that God's name be glorified. We should not seek to destroy others, but stand in support of professing Christians, whom God has used to demonstrate Jesus's power and victory over the evils of this world, through salvation by grace.

47 ¶ "So Saul took the kingdom over Israel, and fought against all his enemies on every side, against Moab, and against the children of Ammon, and against Edom, and against the kings of Zobah, and against the Philistines: and whithersoever he turned himself, he vexed them. 48 And he gathered an host, and smote the Amalekites, and delivered Israel out of the hands of them that spoiled them."

Saul now takes charge as king over Israel and begins to make war against the enemies of Israel. Thus, God uses Saul, to fulfill his word to Samuel about using Saul, to deliver Israel from their enemies.

49 "Now the sons of Saul were Jonathan, and Ishui, and Melchishua: and the names of his two daughters were these; the name of the firstborn Merab, and the name of the younger Michal: 50 And the name of Saul's wife was Ahinoam, the daughter of Ahimaaz: and the name of the captain of his host was Abner, the son of Ner, Saul's uncle. 51 And Kish was the father of Saul; and Ner the father of Abner was the son of Abiel. 52 And there was sore war against the Philistines all the days of Saul: and when Saul saw any strong man, or any valiant man, he took him unto him."

We have here the names of Saul's children and kindred. We are told that Saul continues to make war on the Philistines all his life. We are also told that he does exactly what God said he would do in: **1Sa 8:11; 10** "And **Samuel told all the words of the LORD unto the people that asked of him a king. 11 And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots. 12 And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and will set them to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots.**"

There is a great warning in this chapter if we are blessed to see it. The warning is to not become high minded or exalted in the flesh. God may continue to use us to bring his will to pass, but eventually there will be a consequence to be paid for disregarding and belittling God. We are told in scripture: **Pr 16:18 ¶ "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."** We shall see this come to pass in Saul's life.

We sometimes see this manifested in church disharmony. Those who are in ruling positions may gather to themselves others who will support them in their desire to be over everyone else. These type things always lead to destruction and division in the church. We need always to remember; Jesus is our KING, and we the sheep.

May God fill us with the spirit of humility and keep us in remembrance that God is the creator, and we are the created. Thank you for revealing to us the "**thou shalt**" which if followed will keep us from performing the "**thou shalt nots.**" Thank you, dear God! For our God given King, Jesus Christ, who rightly deserves the glory. Hallelujah! Amen!