

A Friend of Faith – I Samuel 14:6-14

I. Introduction:

- A. There are adrenalin junkies who climb sheer cliffs and rock walls for the thrill of accomplishment.
 - 1. And there are more rational people who do it because it has to be done.
 - 2. Sometimes the beaches of Normandy have to be assaulted, because there is no other way to victory.
 - 3. That is what we see illustrated in our scripture for this evening.
- B. In our on-going study of practical faith, I am trying to find examples that we might apply and duplicate.
 - 1. There is a great example of faith in this Biblical account.
 - 2. In fact there are two great examples. The title of this message relates to the second.
 - 3. Again, despite the centuries between Jonathan's day and ours, the parallels between us are uncanny.

II. We begin with the **DEPLORABLE CONDITION** of Israel at the time.

- A. **Chapter 13** begins by telling us that Saul had been king in Israel for two years.
 - 1. The State of the Union address that January may have expressed some hopeful or ambitious points, but the actual condition of the nation was abysmal.
 - 2. Please recall that Israel had been ruled by the Lord for decades, through Godly men of His choice – Moses, Joshua, and more recently, Samuel.
 - 3. But as Samuel aged, Israel decided she wanted a king, so she could be more up-to-date.
 - 4. *"Make us a king to judge us like all the nations."*
 - 5. God's prophet, Samuel, was highly offended, but the Lord told him that it really wasn't personal.
 - 6. For years Israel had been rejecting of God, and this was just another downward step.
- B. At this point let me draw a parallel.
 - 1. What if we liken Israel to the Lord's churches in these days in which we live?
 - 2. In my lifetime I have seen good, Biblical churches, which have deliberately chosen to forsake the pattern we have in the **Book of Acts** and to fashion themselves like the modern world.
 - 3. They have told their pastors to tell God, *"Make us into a church like the other denominations, so that we might be able to compete in a modern society."*
- C. Sadly, one of the results of that philosophy and direction is spiritual powerlessness.
 - 1. **Chapter 13** ends with information about the toothlessness of Israel's condition.
 - 2. *"It came to pass in the day of battle, that there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people that were with Saul and Jonathan"* expect for the king and his son.
 - 3. Israel was defenseless. They didn't have a prayer – literally and physically.
 - 4. The sword of Spirit had been cast aside.
 - 5. Their religion was Bibleless. Their worship was spiritless. Their lives were without divine direction.
 - 6. Blame might be thrown upon a number of reasons, but whatever, that was the condition of the people who were supposed to represent God before the Philistines.
- D. Furthermore, what if we liken Israel's king to the modern church pastor?
 - 1. If I was somebody else teaching this lesson, I might not like what I am going to say here tonight.
 - 2. But let's just be blunt and honest: the reason many churches – most churches – lack revival is because of their pastors.
 - 3. Israel was looking for a king, so they wouldn't have to deal directly with the Lord.
 - 4. If we had a pastor who is head and shoulders above everyone else, we wouldn't need the Holy Spirit.
 - 5. Israel refused to put the Lord first, and so they ended up without the blessing or power of God.
- E. Israel's pastor Saul, took credit for whatever little good took place, leaving no room for anyone else, including the Lord. If there was a good Sunday, it was because the pastor was fired up.
 - 1. And if someone was comforted or blessed it was because his psychology was on point that day.

2. Notice **13:3** – *“And Jonathan smote the garrison of the Philistines that was in Geba, and the Philistines heard of it. And Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, Let the Hebrews hear. And all Israel heard say that SAUL had smitten a garrison of the Philistines...”*
 3. I’m not going to say that Saul had a public relations team that was deliberately manipulating the truth.
 4. But it was not he who had smitten the Philistine garrison, and he did nothing to quell the misinformation.
- F. In the mean time Jonathan’s victory provoked the Philistines to anger, *“and Israel also was had in abomination with the Philistines,”* so they gathered a huge army, *“as the sand which is on the sea shore in multitude.”*
1. In the light of a probable Philistine attack, Saul fled for his life from the highlands north of Jerusalem down into the Jordan Valley at Gilgal.
 2. He and his met men forsook their homes, and maybe their families out of fear of the enemy.
 3. Satan was having a field day. The Israelite society had become worldly and Philistine.
 4. Then with the vast army of the ungodly, glaring down on them from the bluffs above, Israel panicked even more and began to desert.
 - a. *“The people did hide themselves in caves and in thickets...”*
 - b. They no longer were the people of God, testifying of the Lord.
 - c. *“And some of the Hebrews went over Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead.”*
 5. Israel had become powerless and useless in the great work of magnifying God’s name.
 6. And I will put the blame on the leader of the nation: Pastor Saul.
- G. At some point, Samuel, God’s man, sent word that in seven days he would come to encourage everyone.
1. Ticktock, ticktock. With the setting of each sun the people were becoming more fearful.
 2. But God had a muzzle over the teeth of the Philistines, and Israel was perfectly safe. No attack ever came.
 3. At apparently 7:00 a.m. on the appointed day, Samuel was still no where to be seen.
 4. Maybe it wasn’t sun up, but it wasn’t sundown. At that point, Saul took it upon himself to usurp the office of the priest and to offer burnt and peace offerings to the Lord.
 5. Then finally, with the smell of the burning sacrifices still in the air, Samuel arrived. *“What hast thou done?”*
 6. Saul replied, Well, you weren’t here and the people were scattering, so *“I forced myself ... and offered a burnt offering.”*
- H. I picture in this, the pastor, who for a hundred different reasons – laziness, worldliness, various kinds of sinfulness – is not a good spiritual leader of his people.
1. I see him nearing the Lord’s day – once again with nothing solid or spiritual to share with his congregation.
 2. I see him throwing together the sacrifice of a few well-worn scriptures, not depending on the Lord for the message, because he is empty of the Spirit of God. That is something in his life week after week.
 3. And yet he believes he is doing God’s work, and he’s being a blessing to his scattering congregation.
 4. No wonder the people are running and hiding. They are weak and starving. Defenseless.
 5. Everyone knows they need the Lord’s blessings, but the man who should access and share those blessings is as empty as anyone else – despite having a sword at his side.
- I. Samuel told him in a very understated way, *“Thou hast done foolishly; thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God.”* He told the king that God had begun taking steps to replace him.
1. *“The Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart.”* One who will do His will.
 2. You are done, Saul, *“for now would the Lord have established by kingdom upon Israel for ever,”*
 3. but because of your sins, you are going to be nothing but a footnote in the church minutes.
- J. What should Saul have done at that point?
1. When it is obvious that the pastor is no longer God’s man for that church, what should he do?
 2. I suppose he could repent and plead with the Lord for forgiveness and restoration.
 3. He could surrender to the Lord and strive once again to be a blessing to the congregation.
 4. Or perhaps he should resign and leave the door open for God’s replacement.

5. But we see none of these things in Saul.
6. In fact, if the dates Mr. Usher gives us are accurate, Saul remained a useless, worthless king for another thirty years.

K. Here is where so many churches are in our day.

1. I'm talking about good churches; not the apostate churches; but the churches of **Revelation 2** and **3**.
2. When they need an infusion of the power, vision and the blessing of God, they have Saul for their angel.
3. When there were Philistines to be defeated and Rahabs to be won, Saul, as David later says, was only wasting his time, pursuing *"after a dead dog, after a flea."*

L. It is in the midst of these circumstances that we see...

III. A DELIGHTFUL EXAMPLE of sacrificial, practical faith.

A. Jonathan was one of the few bright spots in the entire nation of Israel at that time.

1. It was Jonathan who defeated the Philistines in **chapter 13**.
2. Later, in his relationship with David, we see that he was a totally selfless young man.
3. He might have said with all sincerity, *"He must increase, but I must decrease."*
4. Like his friend, David, Jonathan couldn't just sit around to see and hear the name of Jehovah dragged through the mud. He had to do something.

B. I Samuel 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."*

1. Jonathan was one of the young converts in the congregation, and he had a good friend who was even younger than he.
2. Jonathan recognized the spiritual poverty in which the nation of Israel dwelt, and he chose to address it.
3. What would have happened if he had gone to his father, telling him that he'd like to go into battle against God's enemy? He would have been grounded and sent home to his mother.
4. But as I have said, the things of the Spirit are highly personal.
5. The pastor doesn't necessarily need to know that a couple of young people are meeting together praying for him and beseeching God for fire to fall from heaven.
6. No one has to know that someone has chosen to go out into the community door-knocking, or is meeting with residents at the senior citizen's home.
7. A group of ladies, or a handful of retirees, might, behind the pastor's back, meet at Starbucks for a Bible study, sharing with other patrons the multiplied gifts of God.

C. Meanwhile we see Saul sitting under a pomegranate tree, while his nation falls apart and God's enemies infest the Promised Land.

1. Oh, but he has Ichabod's brother with him, and that man is wearing a religious ephod, going through the motions of religious service. The glory is departed, but the religion is still intact.
2. They have church services every Wednesday and three times on Sunday, but no body cares, because the Lord is not among them.
3. Why isn't Saul under a gnarly oak tree on his knees instead of on his bottom eating pomegranate fruit?
4. Why isn't he pleading with the Lord for divine power? Why isn't he telling his son to follow him into battle?
5. Isn't this what a leader should be doing?

D. Getting back to Jonathan, I see a young man being filled with the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

1. *"Let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised"* lost people.
2. From where did his idea come? It didn't come from his father.
3. And listen to his faith: *"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."* This is bold, practical trust in God.

4. His father might have explained it away saying it was nothing but the impetuosity of youth. But it wasn't.
 - a. This wasn't a death wish. This wasn't to go down in history as a hero. And it wasn't without forethought.
 - b. Jonathan had thought it through. I'll say that he had prayed over it.
 - c. *"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. 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."*

- E. When looking for another lesson on practical faith for tonight, I was first struck by the faith of Jonathan's armorbearer as much as I was with Jonathan. He was a true friend of faith.
 1. Once again we have an example of the infectious nature of someone else's trust in the Lord.
 2. Jonathan could see what the Lord was going to do, and he confidently shared this with his friend.
 3. Immediately this younger man said, *"Do all that is in thine heart; turn thee; behold I am with thee according to thy heart."*
 4. This young man was willing to risk his life based upon the faith of Jonathan. The faith was being spread.
 5. All it takes is one young person who is on fire for the Lord. One example of faith grew into two.
 6. But what it had been Pastor Saul instead of Jonathan?
 7. The son fired up another young man, but if the King had the same kind of faith, he might have ignited an entire congregation – a nation.
- F. When God is in control of a situation, surprising things – miraculous things can take place.
 1. It was miraculous that the foolish Philistines said, *"Come up to us, and we will shew you a thing"* – or two.
 2. Jonathan and his friend essentially had to crawl up the slope into the garrison of the Philistines.
 3. At any point the enemy might have showered a blizzard of arrows down on this pair of Hebrews.
 4. But the hand of God held back the hands of the archers. There was faith in action here.
- G. Jonathan and his friend climbed up to a flat area at the edge of the cliff and then the enemy permitted them to pull out their swords.
 1. Several Philistines confidently approached, but one after another they fell under Jonathan's blade, while his armorbearer administered the coup de'gras.
 2. The fight grew in intensity as more and more Philistines realized they were outmanned by the men of God.
 3. About twenty of the enemy lost their lives in a relatively short period of time.
 4. In some circles that would have been considered to be a great victory, but actually it was quite small.
 5. Because at that point the Lord shook the land; the earth quaked and *"there was a very great trembling."*
 6. And the watchmen of Saul, on the other side of the ravine, could see the enemy beginning to run, *"beating down one another."*
 7. After the faithless segment of Israel finally became engaged, the Philistines were driven back from Michmash all the way to Aijalon. There was a great, great victory that day.

IV. Conclusion

- A. There would not have been any victory at all if it was not for the faith of Jonathan, and the reciprocal faith of his companion.
 1. There would not have been any victory if the congregation had been left to its human leadership.
 2. There would not have been any victory if God had not stepped in to defeat the enemy.
 3. Not only are there parallels between that day and ours, but to my mind the similarities are obvious.
- B. Pray that I don't become – or return to – the kind of leader that Saul was.
 1. His day was over. He had sinned away his opportunity to serve the Lord.
 2. It was **becoming** the day of Jonathan and the day of David. But it **always was** the day of God.
 3. The Lord can still route the Philistines. We still **need** Him to route the enemy.
 4. We can be that Jonathan this day greatly needs, or we can be Jonathan's companion.
- C. There is nothing impossible to God when He is given a couple of people with great faith in Him.