

# Stepping Out – 1 Samuel 14:1-14

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. *Superman*

1. The new *Superman* movie is out & has done pretty well.
2. There's something so *alluring* about the ability to fly & to accomplish such amazing feats of strength.
3. Hollywood has discovered that movies about Superheroes are usually profitable.
  - a. They appeal to something in us that *yearns to be heroic*.
  - b. It isn't just about flying, or lifting cars, or stopping bullets.
  - c. We want to make our lives *count* – we long to make a *difference*.
  - d. We hope the world is a better place for our having lived in it.
  - e. Many think it takes super-powers to make that happen.

### B. *Not So*

1. Not so.
2. Today we take a look at an ordinary guy who discovered the source of extraordinary strength & tapped into it to do something great.
3. It turns out you don't have to be from Krypton, or be bit by a radioactive spider in order to accomplish superhuman feats.

## II. TEXT

### A. *V. 1*

**<sup>1</sup>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.**

1. First off – let's set the scene.
2. Saul is the first king of Israel.
  - a. But he has yet to begin the *primary task* he's been *appointed* to –
  - b. Liberating Israel from the oppression of the Philistines.
3. Samuel, the last Judge of Israel, had *begun* the liberation movement a short time before.
  - a. He'd then passed it off to Saul as the new king.
  - b. But Saul hadn't done much yet.
  - c. And as a result, the gains Israel had under Samuel were lost as the Philistines moved back in to take possession of several strategic locations inside Israeli territory.
4. In ch. 13 we read that Saul's son Jonathan with a thousand men took a Philistine outpost.
5. The Philistines responded by bringing up a massive army to Michmash, in the *heart* of Israeli territory.
  - a. From there they sent out raiding parties to the north, west, & east,
  - b. Trying to goad Saul's army into open battle.
6. But in the face of so many, most of Saul's men deserted. Only 600 remained.

7. The end of ch. 13 tells us that what made the coming conflict even *more* lopsided was that the Philistines had made sure the people of Israel had no ability to make iron weapons.
    - a. The only iron Israel possessed was farm tools.
    - b. And even then, they had to go to special Philistine blacksmiths to get them sharpened.
    - c. All Israel had for metal weapons were the bronze spears & swords they'd brought out of Egypt 400 years before, along with the plunder they'd taken in the conquest of Canaan.
    - d. But most of those were in an advanced state of decay & easily broken when struck by modern iron.
    - e. The upshot was that most of Israel's weapons were wood or stone.
    - f. Which means while the Philistines were using the latest technology of the Iron Age, Israel was still living in the Stone Age.
  8. During WWII, when Hitler invaded Poland with his *blitzkrieg*, his lightening war, rolling hundreds of *tanks* across the fields & flying hundreds of *planes* across the skies, the Poles came out to meet the invaders on *horses*! It was no contest.
  9. Such was the disparity between the well-ordered army of Philistia & the rag-tag farmer-soldiers of Israel.
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10. One day, as Saul & his 600 loyal hold-outs were camped at Gibeah a few miles from the main Philistine army at Michmash, his son Jonathan had an idea.
    - a. Why not go scout out the enemy lines.
    - b. So he turned to his armor-bearer who helped him put on & maintain his battle dress & said – “Let's go check it out.”
    - d. Jonathan didn't say anything to his dad because he knew he'd forbid it.
    - e. Though Saul had been given the task of delivering Israel, he refused to engage.
    - f. The more he waited, the more the enemy secured their positions, while his own troops became demoralized & deserted.
  11. Jonathan had had enough waiting & decided it was *time for action*.

### **B. Vs. 2-3**

**<sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup>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.**

1. When Jonathan & his armor-bearer left, they did so secretly – no one else knew.
2. As for Saul, instead of making plans for battle, he was sitting in the shade in a nice neighborhood of his hometown.
3. Besides his dwindling force of 600 was the powerless descendant of a washed-up priesthood.
  - a. Ahijah was the great grandson of the former high priest Eli.
  - b. Though Ahijah was wearing the *uniform* of the high priest, God had *rejected* his family from being priests because of their wickedness.

- c. In ch. 13 we learn that God had *also* rejected *Saul* from the throne because of his faithlessness.
- 4. So here they are, 2 rejected leaders, sitting at their ease while opportunity for greatness lies just miles away.
- 5. The spiritually rejected often unite to pool their misery & cynicism.

### C. Vs. 4-5

**<sup>4</sup>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. <sup>5</sup>The front of one faced northward opposite Michmash, and the other southward opposite Gibeah.**

- 1. We know right where this was.
- 2. The word translated "rock" here refers to a *cliff*.
  - a. This whole region is cut by east-west running gullies.
  - b. The one that separates Gibeah from Michmash has steep sides of bare rock.
- 3. When Jonathan left Gibeah, he followed the slope of the hill to the bottom of this gully, then along it until he was opposite the outpost the Philistines had set up to keep an eye on Saul's army.
- 4. Since you always wanted to attack from high ground, the Philistines had little to fear from an attack climbing the face of the cliff.
- 5. Jonathan knew they'd be able to get close to the outpost because the sentries wouldn't be looking their direction.

### D. Vs. 6-7

**<sup>6</sup>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." <sup>7</sup>So his armorbearer said to him, "Do all that is in your heart. Go then; here I am with you, according to your heart."**

- 1. Now that they've seen the Philistine position, Jonathan makes a proposal – "Let's attack!"
- 2. This isn't a whim or an impetuous dare. It's the result of sound reasoning.
- 3. Jonathan had been mulling things over & had arrived at some important conclusions.
  - 1 - He *knew* the land *belonged to Israel*; the Philistines *didn't belong there*,
    - 1) He knew that during the last couple centuries God had allowed foreigners to oppress Israel as a corrective to her straying from Him.
    - 2) But God had made it clear that now was a season of *deliverance*, not oppression.
    - 3) His father Saul had been made king for this very purpose – to *liberate* Israel from the Philistines.
    - 4) So their presence on the cliff above him was just wrong!
  - 2 - As the king's *son*, he knew he was *called* to make things right.
  - 3 - God possessed *more than enough* power to defeat the enemy.
    - 1) Israel couldn't match the Philistines in either numbers or weapons,

- 2) But between **God** & the Philistines – it was no contest!
4. Putting all this together, Jonathan arrived at a brilliant conclusion = Why not go for it?
    - a. Why not step out & see if God wanted to use **them, right at that moment**, to bring deliverance?
    - b. After all, if it was God’s will, then their numbers & gear had little to do with it.
    - c. Jonathan said it well: With God, it’s not about the numbers.
    - d. God can use many; He can use few – it doesn’t matter **what** the number is as long as there’s faith in Him.
    - e. And in the final analysis, it only takes **one** who believes to open the door to the power & presence of God.
  5. Jonathan didn’t have a “special word” or vision from God on this.
    - a. No prophet had sent him on this errand.
    - b. It was a simple venture of faith.
    - c. He said, “It **may be** that the Lord will work for us.”
  6. Take careful note of that – it’s important to our **application** of the lesson here.
    - a. When someone launches out on a new endeavor, they’ll often say God **told them** to do thus & so.
    - b. Sometimes things go well – other times they fail miserably.
    - c. When they fail, the challenge comes of trying to figure out if God really spoke.
    - d. Some people wave God’s name like a magic wand over their life-choices – claiming what they’re doing comes at His direction.
    - e. But little of what they claim He’s telling them to do works out.
    - f. Often **they** don’t complete or follow through on what they begin.
  7. God is not moody. He doesn’t change His mind. His will is neither whimsical nor flighty.
  8. Jonathan didn’t say **God had told him** to attack the outpost.
  9. He simply coupled what God had said about the land to his ancestors’ experience of the power of God, and decided to step out & see **if** God would do something.
  10. He didn’t dress it up in super-spiritual talk about special revelations. He reasoned -
    - a. God is faithful & all powerful.
    - b. He’s here now & sees & hears us.
    - c. He’s made it clear this is the time of liberation from the Philistines.
    - d. There are some Filthy Phillies right there.
    - e. Let’s see if God wants to use us!
  11. His armor-bearer recognized Jonathan’s proposal as a **spiritual challenge**; not a selfish attempt at grabbing fame.

**7So his armorbearer said to him, “Do all that is in your heart. Go then; here I am with you, according to your heart.”**

- a. He knew this came from Jonathan’s heart, not his flesh.
- b. It wasn’t an arrogant attempt to promote himself.
- c. It was a humble response to do something his conscience told him needed

to be done.

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12. While Jonathan is the one who comes off as the *hero* in this story, let's not forget the role his armor-bearer played.
  - a. When Jonathan first left the safety of his home in Gibeah, it was this man he took with him.
  - b. Now at the foot of the cliff below the enemy outpost, it's the armor-bearer he presents the challenge to.
  - c. It seems that every great leader had someone who stood in the background giving support.
    - 1) Abraham had Eliezer
    - 2) Moses had Joshua, who in turn had Caleb
    - 3) David had Nathan & his mighty men
    - 4) Daniel had his 3 friends
    - 5) Paul had Timothy & Titus, & Epaphroditus.
  - d. Church history is filled with stories of men & women who by faith rose to meet the challenge of the time. Most of them had *someone* whose *mission* was to encourage them to press on.
13. The presence & ministry of someone like that is an *important confirmation* of the call to be a leader, specially a leader whose mission is to open *new frontiers* for the Kingdom.

#### **E. Vs. 8-10**

**<sup>8</sup>Then Jonathan said, "Very well, let us cross over to these men, and we will show ourselves to them. <sup>9</sup>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. <sup>10</sup>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."**

1. This is *wisdom*.
2. While it might seem courageous to just rush into the enemy outpost & start swinging, Jonathan wasn't going to *presume* on God.
3. It's a *fine line* between faith & presumption.
4. Look – if Samuel had to Jonathan, "Take your armor-bearer & go attack the Philistine outpost at Michmash, for God will deliver it into your hand," it would have been a matter of *simple obedience*.
5. But Jonathan wasn't operating with that kind of direction from God.
6. This was something he'd arrived at on his own & knew God was not under any obligation to come through.
  - a. God may very well want to use him,
  - b. Or—He may have another plan in the works Jon didn't know about.
7. "How to know? Well, let's give God an opportunity to make it clear."
  - a. We'll step out of hiding & shout at the sentries on the top of the cliff.
  - b. If they say, "We're coming to get you," we'll take that as a sign God's not in this.
  - c. If they say, "Come on up," then God's going to give us victory.
8. 

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The story of Gideon has several similarities to this. Gideon also asked for a

- sign to confirm God's will.
9. When we read this story, we're thrilled by Jonathan's heroic courage.
    - a. His example of stepping out in faith encourages & beckons us to follow his example.
    - b. But when it comes down to it, we often balk at stepping out because we fear *failing*.
    - c. We fear what others will say if we fall flat on our face.
    - d. We don't speak to someone about the Lord when a golden opportunity arises because we're afraid they'll get angry, reject, or make fun of us.
    - e. We don't sign up to go on a mission's trip because we can't see where the \$2,000 is going to come from.
    - f. Though we get angry at the school board for indoctrinating our children in immorality & godlessness, we don't attend board meetings or say anything because, who am I anyway? What change can I make?
  10. Jonathan's faith in God wasn't just seen when he rushed up that cliff & attacked the outpost.
    - a. We see it here when he stepped out & gave God the opportunity to reveal His will.
    - b. If the Philistines said, "Wait there, we'll come down," there would have been *no less faith* on Jonathan's part.
    - c. He simply would have known attacking the outpost was not God's plan that day.
  11. Listen, God delights when we step out as Jonathan did!
    - a. He loves it when we open up & give Him an opportunity to *use us*.
    - b. He's looking for people who lay hold of His love & power, & take *bold steps* into new territory to make them know to others.
  12. Since God loves it - we ought to love it to – and that means giving others the *room to fail*, to step out and venture big things.
    - a. If it doesn't work out, if they fall flat on their face – well, you know what? *At least they tried!*
    - b. It may not have been God's will to bring success in that venture of faith, but because it *was done by faith*, God *is* blessed!
    - c. A father watches his toddler daughter crawl over to a table & pull herself upright.
      - 1) She steadies herself, then tries to walk.
      - 2) She's way too young & her legs aren't strong enough, so down she goes.
      - 3) Is dad displeased because she falls? No – he's bursting with pride at her attempt to walk.
    - d. And so is our divine Dad when our stepping out in faith is motivated by a desire to walk with Him in some new venture – even when we fall.

#### **F. Vs. 11-14**

**<sup>11</sup>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."**

1. Earlier we're told that when the Philistines had marched in mass to Michmash, most of the people of the region had either fled or gone into hiding in the many

caves of this area.

**12 Then the men of the garrison called to Jonathan and his armorbearer, and said, "Come up to us, and we will show you something." Jonathan said to his armorbearer, "Come up after me, for the LORD has delivered them into the hand of Israel."**

2. This was the sign they'd set for knowing God was opening the door of victory over the enemy.
3. But now that the sign comes – a decision has to be made – GO, or not?
4. Jonathan had done the *wise thing* & had already made the decision **BEFORE** he stepped out of hiding.
5. It was just a matter of collecting the results.
6. Faith in God did not *replace work*. It infused the work with eagerness & joy.
7. How I wish we had a video of Jon scrambling up that cliff!
  - a. Was he smiling? Giggling? Laughing?
  - b. Was he taunting them, telling Philistine jokes?
    - 1) How many Philistines does it take to screw in a light bulb? What's a light bulb? Exactly!
    - 2) How do you keep the Philistine army from charging? Take away their credit card.
    - 3) A Canaanite, Ammonite, and Philistine are running away from the Jews when they come up to a forest and decide to hide by each climbing a tree.

When the Jews arrive, they go to the first tree where the Canaanite is, and shout, "We know you're up there; come down." Thinking fast, the Canaanite in a great impersonation of a bird says, "Tweet, tweet, tweet..."

The Jews move on to the next tree where the Ammonite is and once again shout, "We know you're up there; come down."

The Ammonite taking his cue from the Canaanite says, "Hoot, Hoot" in a good impersonation of an owl.

The Jews move on to the last tree where the Philistine is and once again shout, "We know you're up there; come down."

Having heard the other two get out of danger by making animal noises, the Philistine thinks for a while, then says, "Moo."

**13 And Jonathan climbed up on his hands and knees with his armorbearer after him; and they fell before Jonathan. And as he came after him, his armorbearer killed them.**

8. Though they had to be tired after scrambling up the cliff & the Philistines had plenty of time to get ready, it was a *complete rout*.
9. The enemy Jonathan only incapacitated, the armor bearer finished off while Jonathan pressed on across the top of the cliff in his offensive, taking the battle to where ever the enemy ran.

**14 That first slaughter which Jonathan and his armorbearer made was about twenty men within about half an acre of land.**

10. This was just the outpost the Philistines had set over the pass leading from Gibeah to Michmash.

main camp at Michmash.

### III. CONCLUSION

#### A. Confusion

1. When word reached the main camp that their outpost had been so quickly overrun, they panicked & began to flee.
2. In Scripture, this is a frequent reaction of the enemy when faith is the main weapon used against them.
  - a. It's what happened when Gideon defeated the Midianites.
  - b. It happened to the Syrians in 2 Kings 7
  - c. In 2 Chr. 20, when the Ammonites, Moabites, & Edomites formed an alliance against Israel, King Jehoshaphat met their huge force by singing praises to God.
  - d. The enemy was thrown into such confusion they began killing *each other*.
3. Jonathan's victory at Michmash along with all these other examples proves what Paul says in Ephesians 6 –
  - a. That though we *live* in a physical universe, the *real battle* is waged in the *spiritual realm*.
  - b. We *don't* wrestle against flesh & blood but against principalities, & powers, against evil spiritual hosts.
  - c. It is these demonic hoards who incited the Philistines & brought them against the land & people of God.
  - d. Defeating them is *never* about numbers, or about martial skill, or even about *spiritual techniques*.
  - e. It's about *faith* – about knowing God & offering ourselves to be the ones through which His kingdom comes, & His will *is done*, on earth as it is in heaven.

#### B. Just One

1. Today, there's a massive demonic assault on our culture.
  - a. One front in this war is the popular media; movies, TV, music
  - b. Another is the public schools & universities.
  - c. Yet another is civil government & the courts.
2. What Jonathan said is still true – God can bring deliverance whether by many or few.
3. Numbers don't matter – *Faith* is the deciding factor.
4. So, if God moves – run for the school board, become a journalist or run for office.
5. Whatever vision of God's greater glory rises up in your heart – let me echo the armor bearer's words!

Go for it!

6. In 1990 Pastor Chuck Smith rented the Pacific Amphitheater in Costa Mesa for several nights & invited Greg Laurie to share a simple Gospel message.
7. Chuck said to Greg, "Let's just see what the Lord will do."
8. Sixteen years later, the Harvest Crusade has seen 3.3 million people attend events all over the US, Canada, Australia, & New Zealand, with over 265,000 people making decisions to follow Christ.



9. Here's the deal – it's not about Chuck Smith or Greg Laurie – it's about God, your God!