

Courage through Confidence in the Lord

1 Samuel 13:1-14:23

Pride Leads to Disobedience (13:1-15)

With his army of 1000 soldiers, Jonathan attacked a Philistines outpost at Geba, a beginning of Israel retaliating against the rule of the Philistines. In fact, when God asked Samuel to anoint Saul as king, God said that the king will deliver Israel from the Philistines, because God has heard the cry of His people (1 Samuel 9:16). However, Saul, in his rush, blew the trumpet to announce their attack. The Philistines gathered their army, and they were much bigger in numbers and greater in equipment. That brought fear to Israel, and many men from Saul's army ran away or hid themselves.

1 Samuel 13:5-8

⁵ The Philistines assembled to fight Israel, with three thousand chariots, six thousand charioteers, and soldiers as numerous as the sand on the seashore. They went up and camped at Mikmash, east of Beth Aven. ⁶ When the Israelites saw that their situation was critical and that their army was hard pressed, they hid in caves and thickets, among the rocks, and in pits and cisterns. ⁷ Some Hebrews even crossed the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead.

Saul remained at Gilgal, and all the troops with him were quaking with fear. ⁸ He waited seven days, the time set by Samuel; but Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and Saul's men began to scatter.

Instead of waiting for Samuel, Saul then decides that he will offer the sacrifices, a task that only the priests were allowed to do.

The Saul here is very different from the Saul we read in chapter 11. There, Saul was convinced it was the Lord that rescued Israel (1 Samuel 11:13). Here, Saul is shaken by his enemies. He was fearful that the army of his enemy was growing, and his army was shrinking. His confidence was on his army, and all he cared about was to win the battle.

The offering of sacrifices before a battle was to demonstrate Israel's dependence on the Lord. Samuel told Saul that he would come to Gilgal, where Saul is, in 7 days. It was probably to teach Saul patience and dependence on God, but the waiting made Saul more anxious. He clearly did not trust in the Lord. By offering sacrifices, Saul demonstrated the opposite of dependence on God:

- (i) It was driven by **fear**: As Saul saw the army of the Philistines grow and his men scattering, he was driven by fear.
- (ii) It was driven by **power and status**: Saul wanted the Lord's favour merely to win battles.
- (iii) Saul **took things into his hands**: Instead of waiting for the Lord's guidance, Saul forces "the Lord's favour" upon himself by profaning what is sacred to the Lord.
- (iv) Saul had **no reverence** for the sacredness and holiness of the Lord: Saul was messing with the worship of God by doing what only the priest could do.
- (v) Saul sees **God as an instrument to fulfil his desires**: Saul thinks that by offering sacrifices, victory would be guaranteed. (cf. 1 Samuel 4:1-11 – Eli's sons brought the Ark of the Covenant to the battlefield, thinking that the ark would guarantee their victory, without regards of their sinful and wicked lives.)

Saul was willing to do anything, including disregarding the instructions of the Lord, profaning the worship of the Lord, to get what he wants. All he wanted was to secure his kingship, to win battles, he had no regards of proper worship towards God.

As Israel's king, Saul was supposed to represent God to Israel, but Saul had no regards towards God, he was disloyal to God, he was dishonouring God. Saul's pride led to his disobedience. How can such a king represent God to his people?

After offering the sacrifices, Saul greeted Samuel like nothing had happened. There was no remorse, no guilt. When confronted by Samuel, Saul did not admit his mistake, and instead put the blame of the men who were scattering in fear and on Samuel for being late.

Saul said he felt "compelled" to offer sacrifices. If Saul was genuine in seeking the Lord, he could have sought the Lord in private, in humility (like Hannah), without crossing the boundaries of a priestly ordained role. If Saul had done that; like Hannah, he would have found relief from anxiety and the renewal of his faith.

- Do we treat God the way Saul does? Do we use God for our purposes? Do we treat God's presence and His word with reverence?

Unfortunately, we face the same temptation to treat God the way Saul does. It is easy to use God for our own purposes. We have no reverence towards His presence or His word. We come and go as we want, when it suits us. We want victory over our battles, but we have no regards for proper worship. We must repent. We must genuinely seek the Lord. We must be humble to ask the Lord for forgiveness.

In response to Saul's pride and disobedience, Samuel pronounced judgment on Saul:

1 Samuel 13:13-14

¹³ "You have done a foolish thing," Samuel said. "You have not kept the command the LORD your God gave you; if you had, he would have established your kingdom over Israel for all time. ¹⁴ But now your kingdom will not endure; the LORD has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him ruler of his people, because you have not kept the LORD's command."

- (i) Saul was unrepentant and prideful here and in many other narratives in the next few chapters. He had no remorse; he has no regards about God.
- (ii) God was merciful. God did not immediately remove Saul from his kingship or strike him dead. There were many chances for Saul to repent, yet he did not. Eventually, God raised another king to take his place, and Saul died a horrific death.
- (iii) The judgment also serves as a reminder that even though Saul is the human king of Israel, Yahweh is God and King of His people. His people, including the king must obey Yahweh.

This part of the narrative ends with Samuel leaving Saul, without offering sacrifices or giving guidance. Saul did not know what to do. Even then, Saul was too prideful to repent and seek the Lord.

Size of the Philistine's Army (13:16-23)

The Philistines had chariots, weapons, and started to deploy their armies, while Saul had only 600 men, and none of his soldiers had any sword or spear. Only Saul and Jonathan had them (v. 22). The threat is real, Israel is facing a great enemy. They were outnumbered, they had few resources. By their own strength, it would be impossible to defeat the enemies. That explains the fear in the people. And it will eventually show the greatness of God for giving Israel victory.

Courage through Confidence in the Lord (14:1-16)

Saul is still undecided of his actions towards the Philistines. And now that Samuel has parted ways with him, Saul brought Ahijah, the great grandson of Eli, the priest, to be his advisor in the matters of the Lord. If you recall, the sons of Eli were wicked and God pronounced judgment on their household for their sin. Yet, Saul is looking to them for guidance and more so a solution to his mess.

In the midst of all this, Jonathan decides to secretly go over to the enemy's outpost. Unlike his father, Jonathan was not fearful or driven by power. His action was driven by his faith in the Lord.

1 Samuel 14:6-10

⁶ Jonathan said to his young armor-bearer, "Come, let's go over to the outpost of those uncircumcised men. Perhaps the LORD will act in our behalf. Nothing can hinder the LORD from saving, whether by many or by few."

⁷ "Do all that you have in mind," his armor-bearer said. "Go ahead; I am with you heart and soul."

⁸ Jonathan said, "Come on, then; we will cross over toward them and let them see us. ⁹ If they say to us, 'Wait there until we come to you,' we will stay where we are and not go up to them. ¹⁰ But if they say, 'Come up to us,' we will climb up, because that will be our sign that the LORD has given them into our hands."

Against all odds, they successfully climbed through dangerous and steep cliffs, and finally arrived at the Philistine's outpost. The Philistine soldiers mocked them and invited them to come. Jonathan and his armour bearer took it as a sign from the Lord; they went, and killed about 20 men. And indeed, the Lord was fighting with them.

1 Samuel 14:15

¹⁵ Then panic struck the whole army—those in the camp and field, and those in the outposts and raiding parties—and the ground shook. It was a panic sent by God.

Contrast of Jonathan and Saul's Faith:

Jonathan	Saul
<p><i>Come, let's go over to the outpost of those uncircumcised men. Perhaps the LORD will act in our behalf. (v. 6)</i></p> <p>- Circumcision is a sign of Yahweh's covenant with Israel.</p> <p>- Jonathan recognizes the covenant and remembers all that Yahweh has done for Israel; all the rescues, all the deliverance – God's faithfulness towards Israel.</p>	<p><i>With him were about six hundred men, ³ among whom was Ahijah, who was wearing an ephod. He was a son of Ichabod's brother Ahitub son of Phinehas, the son of Eli, the LORD's priest in Shiloh. (vv. 2-3)</i></p> <p>- Saul has no regards of the covenant and disobeyed the Lord.</p> <p>- He associates himself with "priest" the Lord had pronounced judgment on for their wickedness (Eli's descendants).</p> <p>- He was more concerned with getting what he wants: to win the battle, than to seek the Lord.</p>
<p><i>Nothing can hinder the LORD from saving, whether by many or by few. (v. 6)</i></p> <p>- Jonathan's confidence is in the Lord, regardless of the size of his army or even the size of the enemy.</p>	<p><i>Saul remained at Gilgal, and all the troops with him were quaking with fear. ... and Saul's men began to scatter. (13:7, 8)</i></p> <p>- As his army becomes smaller day after day, Saul was gripped with fear, because his confidence is in the size of his army, not the Lord.</p>
<p><i>⁹ If they say to us, 'Wait there until we come to you,' we will stay where we are and not go up to them. ¹⁰ But if they say, 'Come up to us,' we will climb up, because that will be our sign that the LORD has given them into our hands.' (vv. 9-10)</i></p> <p>- Jonathan recognizes the possibility of a mistake on his part, hence letting the response of the Philistines to be a sign from the Lord.</p>	<p><i>¹¹ "What have you done?" asked Samuel. Saul replied, "When I saw that the men were scattering, and that you did not come at the set time, and that the Philistines were assembling at Mikdash, ¹² I thought, 'Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the LORD's favor.' So I felt compelled to offer the burnt offering." (13:11-12)</i></p> <p>- Saul was simply too arrogant and prideful to admit his mistakes, even when confronted.</p>

Jonathan	Saul
<p><i>"perhaps the Lord will act on our behalf"</i></p>	<p><i>"sought the Lord's favour"</i></p>
<p><i>"nothing can hinder the Lord from saving"</i></p>	<p><i>"felt compelled"</i></p>

Both Saul and Jonathan used the "right words". But, it meant very different things, with different motivation. As much as Saul wanted to seek the Lord, it was for his benefit, it was out of selfish ambition. Jonathan did not dishonour God in that way. His courage was driven by his faith in the Lord. He was more concerned with what God wants to do. (cf. David in 1 Samuel 17:47, "All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD's, and he will give all of you into our hands.")

- Are we genuinely putting our confidence in the Lord like Jonathan? Or are we like Saul, knowing all the "right words", yet have different meaning and motivations?

The Lord Delivers (4:16-23)

Saul sees the chaos in the Philistine outpost, he finds out that Jonathan had gone to attack the enemy. And Saul decides to ask Ahijah to inquire of the Lord what they should do. But, the tumult from the Philistine outpost grew until Saul finally decided to join the attack. By then, the Lord has already taken care of things: the Philistines were in total confusion, striking each other with their swords (v. 20).

Saul's foolishness: He hears the chaos in the Philistine's camp, but decides to take out the ark to "seek the Lord". Saul and Ahijah were insensitive to what God was already doing. Halfway through inquiring, Saul was again impatient and decided to go ahead with the attack. He was indecisive because he was fearful. He was more concern with his desire to win than truly seeking the Lord.

Victory came from the Lord:

1 Samuel 14:15

15 Then panic struck the whole army—those in the camp and field, and those in the outposts and raiding parties—and the ground shook. It was a panic sent by God.

1 Samuel 14:23

23 So on that day the LORD saved Israel, and the battle moved on beyond Beth Aven.

God was still faithful towards Israel, even when Saul and Israel were unfaithful. Neither Saul nor Israel deserve the victory, yet God delivered them through those who are willing to seek and obey Him (in this case Jonathan & his armour-bearer).

Jesus Christ, Our Deliverer

God continues to be faithful today. None of us deserve salvation, yet God bought our salvation through the One who loved us and was willing to obey the Father until death.

Ephesians 6:12

12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

- Reflect on the battles you are fighting.

Just as God gives Israel victory over their enemies, God the Holy Spirit gives us strength and power daily to battle and win against the enemy. Jesus, in His death and resurrection has defeated the enemy. The full consummation of His victory will be fulfilled in His Second Coming. In the meantime, the enemy can only intimidate us, putting fear, guilt, and doubt in us.

Both Saul and Jonathan faced the same enemy, the army that is bigger and greater than them. But, their responses were different. One was driven by fear, the other was driven by courage. One trusted in the strength of his army, the other trusted in the Lord. As we face challenges and suffering, we must decide whether we will be like Saul or Jonathan. Will we trust in the Lord or something else.

Prayer Items

- Discover the joy of our salvation
- Humility to admit our mistakes, ask for forgiveness and repent
- Reverence for the presence and the word of God
- Genuinely seek the Lord
- Assured of the victory in Christ; placing our confidence in the Lord

Life Church

- Wisdom and discernment to make decisions
- Delight in the presence and the word of God
- Transformation and breakthrough
- Those who are going through challenges
- Unity in diversity
- Represent Christ to the people around us (homes, schools, marketplace)
- Salvation
- Ministries: Life Explorer, Redeeming Roses, Destiny Kids & Teens, Sunday School, Lifeline, Worship, Life Seed, Cell
- A lighthouse to the community (Sungai Way)

Healing

- Bro Harold (Connie & Mel's dad)
- Si Yun: chemotherapy; Jayden: physiotherapy

Covid-19 Pandemic

- Healing & deliverance
- Protection
- Front-liners & resources
- Economy
- Sabah

Malaysia

- Leaders
- Churches
- Unity