



June 29, 2025
The Reverse Logic of Faith
1 Samuel 14; Hebrews 11:1-10
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Faith—without it, you cannot please God. That’s quite a statement. I’m assuming that most of you this morning would like to be those who know how to please God...you are of those in the world who hope one day to hear God say to you, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant.’ How do you get there? What does a life of faith look like?

To answer that question, turn with me to 1 Samuel 14. We have been focusing on Saul, the first king of Israel; we’ve seen how he has not lived up to the expectations of a king and that even God himself was grieving over Saul as a person and as a king. In chapter 14 we see a comparison between Saul and his son Jonathan. Keep Hebrews 11 in mind as I read this.

1 Samuel 14:1-23

I think we see in this story who God is pleased with and who He is not pleased with.

Some back story: let’s recall that in chapter 13 Jonathan had launched an ambitious attack against the Philistines with success—but that seemed to only stir a hornets’ nest, and the Philistine war machine came marching against Saul and his men. They were outnumbered 50-1 and had no weapons and everyone was terrified—except Jonathan. Saul, who is far more concerned with what people think about him (he is living under the idol of approval) doesn’t know what to do. He keeps waiting for people to tell him what to do and gets it wrong.

Now, we pick up in chapter 14 and the setting is the same. The Philistines have pressed in; they’re sending raiding parties into Israel territory, agitating and bullying Israel.

Saul is in Gibeah under the pomegranate tree with his 600 men; Jonathan is alone with his armor bearer and is restless. Saul’s logic at this point is uncertain—he’s surrounded himself with his men, has the priest with him and even the ark, but he’s not doing anything. It seems clear that to be cautious and waiting is the order of the day. No one told Jonathan that was the plan. Before we’re out of verse one, he’s prodding his sidekick to go stir the hornets’ nest again.

Jonathan is displaying the reverse logic of faith—the kind of faith that pleases God. Look at where the logic begins:

1. What he sees: he sees nothing is happening and that’s a problem! But physically, he sees obstacles. It’s hard for us in the prairies to grasp the geography of the land, but it says there are two steep cliffs that form a wall around the pass. The cliffs were so notorious they had names: “Slippery” and “Thorny”. To access the Philistines, they would have to cross over both cliffs, up one, down one, up the other, down the

other. It's like suggesting when you cross into BC, don't travel via a pass, like Rogers Pass, but rather go over the mountains directly. It's ridiculous. Not only does he see these cliffs and the impossible stretch to go, but he also sees that there are more Philistines. It's not like he takes a large group; it's two against 20...and that's just the beginning. If he makes it over the cliffs, he is now on enemy territory and is walled in by the cliffs behind him. That is what he sees.

2. What he knows: He knows two things. One: that the 'uncircumcised Philistines' are over there. They are oppressing the people, and the commands were clear that Saul (his dad) was supposed to drive them out of the land...but he failed to do that back in chapter 12—he did not 'do what his hands found to do.' Second: he also knows something about God. **"Nothing can hinder the Lord from saving, whether by many or by few."** His confidence is in God. He's not waiting— what for? He is surefooted in the power and strength of Almighty God. He remembered what Samuel said to Saul at his coronation in **1 Samuel 12:24 "Consider what great things he has done for you."** That whole chapter Samuel is reminding them of all the things God has done for them—delivering them out of Egypt, saving them from this army and that army...and on and on it goes...this leads Jonathan to utter this infamous and incredibly dangerous...and inspiring word **'Perhaps'** In light of what he see and what he knows...perhaps the Lord will deliver! It actually means something he doesn't know—he's not 100% sure God will deliver them...but there's only one way to walk on water...get out of the boat. Jonathan knows that!
3. What he does: First: He gives up the element of surprise (he lets the outpost see him). Second, he applies reverse logic—if the Philistines leave their position of strength and come down to fight Jonathan, then he will avoid that—its too easy. On the other hand, if the Philistines invite Jonathan up—that's the sign that God has given the whole situation into his hands. And that is what he does. It is a situation that is so impossible, only God could deliver it. Those are the odds Jonathan is looking for...and that is what he does.

Now, let's look at Saul.

1. What he sees: he sees safety and protection. He is surrounded by his bodyguard; he has the priest with him and even the ark of the covenant. Just a note, the priest is the brother to 'Ichabod', the son of Phineas, the son of Eli—do you remember them? This is not the right person to have with you. He also sees the ark—do you remember the last time the ark was brought into battle? That too did not go well. Doesn't seem like a good start...but that is not what Saul sees. He seems content, he's safe.
2. What he knows: he does not know what his son is doing, but eventually he does find this out. When the Philistines are fleeing, he counts his men and finds that Jonathan is gone...and caused this situation. He knows that he needs to seek the priest's blessing before going into battle, so he calls Ahijah to bring the ark of God (v.18). He doesn't know if God is with him yet; he's been doubting this since he was anointed

king. He's not sure he will attain a victory—the word 'perhaps' is not in his vocabulary. He must know for sure before he does anything.

3. What he does: when the uproar of the Philistines gets too loud, he stops the priest from doing his job (the only time recorded in Scripture that someone did something like this!) Finally, he gathers his troops to attack, but they find that the Philistines are attacking and destroying themselves.

What is happening? God had caused a great panic vs 15 **“the ground shook. It was a panic sent by God.”** (NIV) and in vs 23 **‘The Lord rescued Israel that day.’** Why? As the direct result of a single individual's bold faith. That's why.

If Jonathan's sight dictated his faith, there would have been no victory. But he reversed it. His faith remembered; it 'saw' the mighty acts of God BEFORE it saw the cliffs and the impossible odds. Jonathan is a story of refreshing courage:

“Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the assessment that something else is more important than fear.” Franklin D. Roosevelt

The kingdom of God, God's name, His reputation, and His purposes were more important. To Saul—they weren't. He would not take a risk. Too dangerous. Everything had to be safe beforehand—you know why? He did not know the Lord; he knew *of* the Lord...but did not know Him. That's why he couldn't trust him with the outcome. How about us?

“We don't take risks for God because we are obsessed with safety, security, and most of all, with the future.”
— Kevin DeYoung ‘Just Do Something’

So we looked at Jonathan and Saul...but what about you?

What do you see? Do you look around and see things that frighten you, that make you want to 'stay under the pomegranate tree?' I have had several conversations this past year with people who 'see' Canada and Winnipeg as places to avoid and possibly leave. I ask, 'Why?'

'Well, because of how crazy it's getting.'

'How crazy?' I ask.

Is it as bad as the Roman empire? Is it as bad as Nazi Germany? Jonathan's logic would be, "Perfect. Homeless camps everywhere...broken and diabolical political system, suffocating Christian witness and community,perfect! This is the kind of environment God does great things in...right?" *Right?*

What do you know? When fear of what you see determines what you know, something is off. Isn't this why we need to remind ourselves of the great things God has done? This is why we read our Bibles, both the Old Testament and the New Testament. To know that God parts the seas and raises the dead. He calms storms with a word, heals

the sick; he redeems the lost and forgives the sinner. He is not intimidated by anything in this world, as though something should frighten God. You know that you live in a secular part of the world that seems to be growing more hostile to sanity and the gospel every day. What do you know?

Romans 8:32-35 “If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?”

Hebrews 11 is a powerful tonic/medicine to remind us of what it looks like to know these things about God in spite of living in very difficult circumstances—**Hebrews 11:13,16 “And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth...They were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.”** Isn't that what we were asking at the beginning of the message? How do we know how to please God? Start living your life by faith. This leads us to:

What are you doing?

John 13:17 “Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.” In your repertoire of vocabulary for making plans, is the word ‘perhaps’ in there? Do you match what you see in your world with what you know about God, leading you to action? Or inaction? Jonathan was passionate for God's kingdom to spread. He didn't attack the outpost for his own fame and for his land. He was already obeying God's orders—he didn't need specifics.

When Jesus said, **‘Go into all the world and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them and teaching them to obey everything I have taught.’**...isn't that our marching orders? It is inconvenient, it is dangerous, it is on your plate...as business leaders, teachers, government employees, self-employed, bottle washers...all called. You are surrounded by people who need the hope of the gospel, and they need people willing to say, ‘Perhaps the Lord will make a way in this.’

The logic is reverse. Jonathan takes the difficult road as confirmation of God's leading. Don't we do the opposite? We take comfort and ease as confirmation. Canada needs men and women who see the landscape with honest eyes, they match that with what they know about God and then they say, ‘Perhaps.’

As Jesus said, **‘Now that you know these things, you'll be blessed if you do them.’** Where are there ‘outposts’ in your area where you live, communities you serve in, that need you to take the hard road to reach someone? Our prayers usually go something like, ‘Lord if you bring ‘so and so’ to church then I'll take that as confirmation that you

want me to share my faith with them.’ Jonathan would reverse that and say something like, ‘If my neighbour throws his cigarette at me, that will be my confirmation to invite them for him...or to church.’

Perhaps. ‘Perhaps’ is risky...but you’re not here for you, but for God’s kingdom. ‘Perhaps’ means things may not work out the way you think—but you ‘know’ God is working all things for his glory.

January 3, 1956—5 young men who were missionaries travelled deep into the Ecuadorian jungle to make contact with a fierce, unreached tribe—the Aucas. Jim Elliot, Nate Saint, Ed McCully, Pete Fleming, Roger Yeuderian circled their plane around the encampment looking for a place to land. They had been dropping gifts by plane for days, doing what they could to send friendly greetings to this remote tribe.

When they found a small beach to land their plane, several Aucas came to meet them. The first meeting went well and soon a few others came. But by January 8, the men of the Aucas determined that the foreigners could not be trusted and must be killed. The five men died on the river trying to share the love of Jesus to a people who had never heard of it before. The men were all in their mid-twenties, some with young families, just starting out in life. ‘So much to live for...so tragic an ending.’ That was how the media described this.

Or was it? What was their goal? To reach the Aucas with the gospel. How had their death accomplished that? Well...several of their immediate family members, Elizebeth Elliot and Rachel Saint in particular, brought their families to the same river to go live with the Aucas and share the gospel with them. The Aucas had in front of them living proof of what forgiveness looked like, (forgiven people forgive people), they had living proof of grace and the power and hope of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The men who killed those 5 missionaries soon gave their lives to Jesus and were changed people. The stories of the 5 martyrs for Jesus inspired thousands of young adults to take up their place in the missionary call to bring the gospel into some of the most difficult places on earth. Why? In Jim Elliot’s journal, he wrote this just a few months before he died: **“He is no fool to give up what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose.”** That is living with “perhaps.”

Luke 9:24 **“Whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.”**