

## THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

### **The Books Of Samuel: God's Shift Of Israel From Apostasy Under The Judges To David's Reign**

#### **I. 1 Samuel: From Samuel To The Death Of Saul**

#### **M. God's Victory Over Destabilizing Institutional Fear**

#### **(1 Samuel 13:1-14:23)**

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

Many people in today's world are experiencing destabilizing institutional fear, what we can readily illustrate:

(1) Last week, I heard a woman from Chicago call into a nationwide radio talk show host to admit that she was living in fear due to the recent police slayings around the nation and the worldwide threat of Islamist terrorist attacks.

(2) She is not alone, either: the AP story, "At town hall, Obama confronts race issues bigger than police" (Republican-American, July 15, 2016, p. 3A) told how "(t)he son of the Louisiana man shot dead by police" wanted "President Barack Obama to help end world racism," that "(t)he mother of a policeman" pleaded "for ways to keep her son safe" and that "(a) single mom who has sent her son away from a rough Baltimore neighborhood" was worried "over how to keep him safe when he's home on the weekends."

(3) The Los Angeles Times Editorial Board story, "Donald Trump plays the fear card at the Republican convention" (latimes.com, July 21, 2016), though typically promoting the paper's progressive stance in support of Mrs. Clinton and in opposition to Mr. Trump, nevertheless revealed by its many references to issues Mr. Trump addressed in his speech the great degree of destabilizing institutional fear that exists in America today.

(4) Institutional fear affects us locally: believers have long expressed to me their fears over national politics, the courts, the economy, public education and perceived efforts by "the powers that be" to subvert individual liberties.

Need: *So, we ask, "How does God want us to respond to the destabilizing institutional fear of today's world?!"*

#### **I. When Saul and Israel focused on their hardships, they experienced destabilizing institutional fear:**

- A. Saul's son Jonathan (1 Samuel 14:1) destroyed a Philistine outpost, so Saul blew a trumpet to urge Israel's men to join him in rebelling against the rest of the Philistine occupational forces in Israel, 1 Samuel 13:1-3 NIV.
- B. The Philistines thus sent 3,000 chariots, 6,000 charioteers and a huge host of infantry into Israel, 1 Sam. 13:1-5 NIV. [The Hebrew text (versus the Septuagint) reads "30,000" chariots, but this number is close to "3,000" in Hebrew, and there were 6,000 charioteers, an impossible arrangement of 1 man for 5 chariots were there 30,000 chariots, so the preferred reading is "3,000" chariots (A. R. Hurst, O. T. Trans. Problems, 1960, p. 29)]
- C. Focusing on the human difficulty of handling the Philistine threat led Israel's people to hide, 1 Samuel 13:6.
- D. With men deserting him for fear of the Philistines and Samuel not soon arriving to perform a sacrifice, Saul also focused on the difficult circumstances he faced and accordingly impatiently, unbiblically performed the sacrifice himself with the resulting loss of the perpetuity of his throne, 1 Samuel 13:7-15.
- E. 1 Samuel 13:16-23 describes how Israel's fear was enhanced by additional subversive Philistine activities:
  1. The Philistines sought to intimidate Israel more by sending out raiding parties from their main invading force to terrorize the people of Israel who were hiding out in the countryside, 1 Samuel 13:16-18.
  2. This terrorism was further complicated by the fact that the Philistines had a monopoly on iron and metal smiths, so only Saul and Jonathan had spears or swords (1 Sam. 13:19 NIV; Ibid., Ryrie, ftns. to 1 Sam. 13:19, 22), and the Philistines also charged Israel heavily to sharpen even their farming tools in order to discourage Israel from using them against the Philistines, 1 Sam. 13:20-23 NIV; Ibid., ftn. to 1 Sam. 13:21.

#### **II. However, in GREAT CONTRAST to the fear exhibited by Saul and Israel, Jonathan led his armor bearer to attack yet another Philistine outpost in a very daring manner, 1 Samuel 14:1-3.**

- A. Jonathan planned to cross the Wadi Suweinit ravine from its cliff "Seneh" on its south rim to its cliff "Bozez" on its north rim that was near an enemy outpost (1 Sam. 14:4-5; The MacMillan Bible Atlas, 1968, p. 60).
- B. A photo of this spot (Z. P. E. B., v. Three, p. 680) shows this ravine is around 75 feet deep with each slope on either side angling up from the bottom 40 degrees with the cliffs high up on either side being nearly vertical.
- C. Jonathan claimed God could save by a few, adding that if he and his armor bearer came out of hiding and their foes called them to cross the ravine and climb up to them, God would give them the victory, 1 Sam. 14:4-10!

#### **III. Jonathan's UNIQUE, DARING plan in GREAT CONTRAST to Israel's and Saul's FEAR was caused by a different FOCUS -- a FOCUS on SCRIPTURE and DIVINE PRECEDENT versus HARDSHIPS:**

- A. Scripture at Deuteronomy 20:1 had promised Israel that if she went to war against a foe who had more horses, chariots and infantry than she did, God Who had brought her out of Egypt would still be with her, implying He

- would give her victory in line with His precedent of defeating Pharaoh's chariots at the Red Sea! (Exodus 14) This truth encouraged Jonathan: he faced many enemy chariots and numerous foot soldiers, but since God had delivered Israel from Pharaoh's chariots at the Red Sea 396 years before (Ibid., Ryrice, p. 2023-2025) with no man in Israel having to fight (Exodus 14), Jonathan knew God was able and willing to give him the victory!
- B. Then, Deuteronomy 32:30b promised 2 Israelis would put 10,000 foes to flight by God's help, and 350 years earlier, near where Jonathan planned to attack the Philistine outpost, Joshua had attacked five Canaanite city states in his "long day" battle (Jos. 10:1-15; Ibid., The MacMillan Bible Atlas, p. 44, 60; Ibid., Ryrice), and God had then caused the Canaanites confusion and anxiety to weaken them for defeat (Joshua 10:9-10 NIV).
- C. Jonathan thus knew that if the Philistine outpost urged a mere 2 Israeli soldiers to climb up a cliff to fight their whole outpost versus the Philistines crossing the ravine to fight the 2 Israelis, God was already causing the enemy anxiety as He had afflicted the Canaanites in Joshua's era, that God was thus giving him the victory!
- IV. Jonathan and his armor bearer thus came out of hiding to the enemy, and, sure enough, the Philistines urged them to cross the ravine and climb up to them. Assured of victory, Jonathan and his armor bearer eagerly descended Seneh, crossed the bottom of the ravine and climbed up Bozez toward the Philistines on their hands and feet, slaying about 20 Philistines as they went uphill, 1 Samuel 14:11-14.**
- V. In reward for their faith, God made the earth quake to frighten the Philistines and confused them into fighting one another (1 Samuel 14:15, 16). Saul and all Israel eventually realized that the enemy was in retreat, so they pursued them and slew them, with God giving Israel a great victory, 1 Samuel 14:17-22!**
- VI. Significantly, the Philistines retreated before Israel in the direction of the Valley of Aijalon to the west of the initial attack by Jonathan and his armor bearer (1 Samuel 14:23), the same valley the Canaanites had used to flee from Joshua 350 years before in Joshua 10:12-15! (Ibid., The MacMillan Bible Atlas)**

***Lesson:*** *Where Saul and Israel focused on the human difficulties they faced only to cower in unbelief and even sin on Saul's part, Jonathan focused on Scripture and divine precedents to form an aggressive, optimistic plan to overcome the difficulties, and God greatly blessed him and made him and his armor bearer a blessing to all Israel.*

***Application:*** *(1) May we believe in Christ to be saved, John 3:16. (2) Instead of falling prey to destabilizing institutional fear by focusing on the human difficulties we face, may we instead focus on Scripture and God's precedents on handling such difficulties to think and function productively: specifically, (a) may we recall Christ's Matthew 16:18 promise that He will build His Church so that the gates of hell would not prevail against it as hope in our era, and so commit ourselves to the ministry of the local church, using our spiritual gift for service to the edify the Body of Christ, cf. 1 Peter 4:10-11. (b) May we also recall that God the Holy Spirit Who is in us is greater than Satan who is in and who controls the world system (1 John 4:4), that we thus (c) rely on the indwelling Holy Spirit for spiritual guidance (Romans 8:14) through Scripture in our deceptive world (2 Timothy 3:13-17) and for empowerment for an edifying demeanor, a demeanor that includes "peace" as opposed to fear (Galatians 5:16, 22-23). (d) May we also recall that God can use even our small efforts to start a great blessing as He did with Jonathan and his armor bearer (Zechariah 4:6), that we act in an attitude of faith that expects God's blessing.*

***Conclusion:*** (To illustrate the message . . .)

As in Jonathan's era, Christ's promise to build His Church in our era in regardless of the opposition of the gates of hell to the contrary is evidenced in even places that seem humanly overwhelmingly closed to discipleship:

(1) Jason Mandryk's work, Operation World, 2010, p. 465 reports that in Iran, "Massive numbers have recently been coming to Jesus . . . Never since the 7th Century has the Church in Persia grown so fast as post-1979, and the most recent years are the most fruitful. In a country able to apply the death sentence for apostasy [against Islam], this underground church multiplication is a remarkable move of the Holy Spirit." (brackets ours)

(2) In China, the "staggering recent growth of the Chinese Church has no parallel in history -- from 2.7 million evangelicals in 1975 to over 75 million in 2010." Amazingly "(p)ersecution and suffering refined the Church and shaped it to withstand successive waves of repression and government efforts to weaken or destroy it. God, powerfully working through unwitting atheist rulers of China, cleared spiritual roadblocks for the advancement of Christianity through Mao Zedong; freed up the economy and gave more freedom to Christians through Deng; and, through Hu Jintao, God guided China to new levels of interconnectedness with the rest of the world, strengthening the link between the Chinese Church and the worldwide body of Christ." (Ibid., p. 216)

**May we trust in Christ to be saved (John 3:16). Then, replacing a focus on human difficulties with a focus on Scripture and God's precedents instead, may we rely on the Holy Spirit to live in spiritual victory!**