

RETHINK POSSIBLE

1 Samuel 14:1-23

All of us know that America is living in crisis. We are in crisis for numerous reasons. Every economic forecaster with any credence at all is saying that we are fast approaching financial meltdown, and when we get there the future will be grim for our children and grandchildren. And covetousness on the one hand and laziness on the other are the causes. Millions and millions are totally consumed with gaining material wealth, and millions and millions more are just as consumed but want it all for nothing. But no less grim is our moral future. Two weeks ago we talked about America's toleration and even approval of two of the greatest evils we read of in Scripture, which are child sacrifice, which in our culture is abortion, and homosexuality. And God's judgment fell severely on Israel and on the heathen because of their refusal to repent from these sins. And we are foolish if we think we are more favored than God's chosen people.

But what makes our economic and moral crisis even worse is that many of our current politicians are leading the charge in the wrong direction, away from God's Word on these issues. Friends, I repeat what I said two weeks ago: If you are saved you are a citizen of two kingdoms. One kingdom is the United States, the other is Heaven. And when conflict in the agendas of man and God arise, if we are true to our faith in Jesus Christ we have no option but to forsake man and stand with God.

Beloved, the elections this Tuesday are about the heart and soul of all that Christians hold to be morally right, and all that America has held since we were founded to be morally right. And more than ever before, now is the time we must take a stand, and we must stand with what God says in His Word! No candidate is perfect, but we have an obligation as followers of Jesus to vote for the men and women who will most closely lead us to follow Jesus' commands. And if enough of us do, we **will** make a difference! And I trust that you will be one of the ones who help to make that difference.

And that's what my message is about today – making a difference. But it is not by electing godly leadership, even though this is what we certainly should strive to do. But it is about **being** a godly leader, being a godly leader in the work of the Kingdom of God. So turn in your Bibles please, as we read together from 1 Samuel 14:1-23. The situation in Israel is not good. For God promised Israel back in Deuteronomy 7 that He would defeat her enemies when she entered the Promised Land, but hundreds of years later the Philistines are bullying God's people around like 5th graders push around preschoolers. And King Saul is just as fearful as his people and has no intentions of doing anything about it at all.

But thank God that Saul had a son that was not like him. For the Bible strongly infers to us that Jonathan saw the shame and disgrace of Israel's plight and just

couldn't take it any longer. Now, Jonathan was probably the commander of Israel's army at the time. We read in 1 Samuel 13:2 that Israel had an army of 3,000 men; Saul had command of 2,000 and Jonathan 1,000. But when Jonathan assessed the sordid situation of Israel, he determined that in this case the solution was not to take his thousand into battle, but to go up to the Philistine camp for a skirmish with no one but his armor bearer. And so that is what he did, and as a result of their victory Saul got involved and he and Jonathan led Israel to a greater victory. But it all started in the mind of one man. You see, God inspired Jonathan to do what one American corporation figured out over 3000 years later, to rethink possible.

Beloved, today I want God to inspire you to rethink possible. To rethink possible of something that He wants to do in your life that you would otherwise think impossible. For many times that's how God starts a great work among His people. He starts by inspiring one man or one woman to rethink possible. In biblical days it was with a Moses, or a Caleb, or a Gideon, or a Nehemiah, or a Paul. But since biblical days God has by no means stopped using one man or one woman to rethink possible. For that's what He did through people like Martin Luther, John Wesley, William Carey, George Mueller, Mother Teresa, Billy Graham, and Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, and Truett Cathy, founder of Chick-Fil-A. And God has caused countless others to rethink possible and make a difference who will never be widely known on earth but are just as well known in Heaven. One of those I never met but I'm certain of is Jim Hartley. Most of you know that Jim was a faithful member of Grant's Creek. Jim died in a tragic accident just months before I came to Grant's Creek, but I've never heard of any deceased person who was spoken of more highly by members of his church. Jim Hartley made a difference!

Now, it just could be that God would do the same thing with you as he did with Jonathan, or Moses or Paul or Jim Hartley. He might do it in your Sunday School class, or in your school class, or in your youth group, or in your family, or in a way larger than you'd ever dream. So today I want us to see how He did it with Jonathan and learn how He can do it with you.

Now, I want us to walk through our text again beginning with verse one. There we read that Jonathan implored his armor bearer to go up with him to the camp of the Philistines and engage them in battle. But the camp of the Philistines was not like a squad of WWII vets with their pop-up campers at a reunion at Lake Lurleen. Chapter 13:5 tells us that they numbered 30,000 chariots, 6000 horsemen, and foot soldiers as the sands of the seas. But God had given Jonathan a holy indignation for the Philistine occupation, and size didn't matter. Because he knew that no matter how big the Philistine army was, his God was bigger! And he told his armor bearer in verse 6, "Come, let us go after these barbarians. It may be that God will work for us, for nothing prevents Him from working with many or with just a few".

Beloved, don't you just love Jonathan's faith?! The faith that would go out on a limb and attempt something absolutely astounding for God - two men challenging an

innumerable army of God's enemies. But that's exactly what Jonathan's faith did. But we must know that first of all he had to have had word from God. You just don't go out on a mission like that unless you know that God is going before you. But friends, I tell you that for those who walk close to Jesus, sometimes God will implant that kind of faith in their hearts. What did Gideon cry out while in battle? "Sun, stand still!" And the sun stood still. What did Elisha cry out when he was surrounded by the Syrian army? "Lord, strike the Syrians with blindness". And the Lord did. What did Peter ask Jesus? "Lord, let me come to you on the water." And Peter did!

Would to God that every one of us would have a hunger in our hearts that God would do something unheard of with us! And would to God that we would really believe that God can do miracles with a few just as easily as He can do it with many. But again, His miracle through you might not be something that would make the evening news. But it would be just as supernatural as Peter's stroll on the water, and it would be just as rewarded in Heaven. And here's the deal, beloved. God has already given you and me the invitation to live in this supernatural realm of blessings! Jeremiah 33:3 says, "Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know". And that promise is for every one of us! It is for you, it is for me.

But I want you to notice some of the critical details of Jonathan's and Israel's victories against the Philistines. First of all Jonathan **steered clear of the naysayers**. The Bible says in verse 1 that he went over to the garrison of the Philistines but he didn't tell his father Saul. Now, why did he not tell Saul? Because he knew that Saul would do nothing but discourage him. You see, Saul was a coward. Saul should have been taking the lead in challenging the Philistines. But he wouldn't, just like he wouldn't do it against Goliath just a little later. And Jonathan didn't want his father to discourage him or even forbid him to go. So he just went on without his father's knowledge or blessings. Beloved, may I say to you that if God gives you a dream that's bigger than you are, there will always be tons of people around you that say you can't do it. But since you have God's blessings for your dream, you certainly don't need theirs. So don't even ask. Just go for your dream!

I read this week of a 46 year old man who has a dream bigger than he is. His name is Tim Scott. Four years ago he became the first black Republican to be elected to the South Carolina state legislature in more than 100 years. And two years ago he and Allen West of Florida became the first two black Republicans from the Deep South to be elected to the U.S. Congress in 100 years. Here is his story.

Tim grew up in a broken home, living with his mother, brother, and grandmother after his parents divorced when he was 7. His mother worked 16 hour days as a nurse's aide to keep the family off welfare. She raised him attending a Baptist church in Charleston, and raised him with the rod. But between the church and the rod and most of all Jesus, he made it through childhood without drinking or doing drugs. When Tim was in the 10th grade he took a job selling popcorn at a movie theater, and

he would often go across the street to a Chick-Fil-A for lunch. It was there that he met a man who God used to change his life. The manager of Chick-Fil-A took an interest in Tim, gave him sandwiches when he couldn't afford them, had long talks with him, and even began to attend local football and basketball games with him. And here's what Tim said of his surrogate father, whose name was John Moniz: "He became an honest, living and breathing example of what was possible in life. He taught me that there is something on the inside of you that is far more powerful than the influences around you".

Before Tim was 18 years old God took John out his life with a fatal heart attack. John was only 38. But see the influence that John Moniz had upon a teenager who was headed nowhere! After John's death a devastated Tim Scott sat down and wrote out a purpose statement for his life. And his purpose was, and still is, to positively impact the lives of 1 billion people before he dies. Think about that. A billion people! Now, most of Tim's friends laughed when they learned of his purpose statement. Even his prayer partner somewhat cynically replied, "Yea, right". "But", his prayer partner said, "If you had told me he would become a US representative I would have laughed and said, 'no way'. But he's there now". Beloved, may God help you and me to live with such purpose in our hearts as Tim Scott, the purpose that God gives which causes us to rethink possible. But may God also help us to reach down and encourage someone else to rethink possible, just like John Moniz. For his reward in Heaven will be just as great as Tim's.

Well, Jonathan steered clear of the naysayers as he pursued his dream, and so does Tim Scott. And so should you and I. But we need to know something else about pursuing a dream for the glory of God. Look again at verse 4. In order for Jonathan to get to the Philistine camp he had to go through a mountain pass that had a sharp rock on both sides. Now, the biblical writer may have mentioned these rocks simply as geographic points, but there is a spiritual meaning here we must not miss. And that is, when you seek to do a mighty work for God, **there will always be obstacles in the way**. For Satan will not allow you to bring the light of Jesus into his darkened kingdom without putting up a fight. Just look at list of biblical heroes that encountered Satanic opposition as they sought to serve God. We've mentioned Nehemiah and Paul already, but to them you can add Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. And then add David, who was constantly fleeing from Saul, and then add Jeremiah, who spent a lot of time sunk in the mire in a dungeon. And don't forget the apostle John, who was exiled on the island of Patmos.

Now, beloved, your obstacles probably won't be as severe as these. But for goodness sake, don't be surprised when they come! And when they do, cry out to your Heavenly Father for grace to overcome, and then set your jaw and grit your teeth and endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ (2 Timothy 2:3). Keep on loving that unloving spouse in the name of Jesus. Get up and get yourself to church when you don't feel like it in the name of Jesus. Keep on writing out your tithe

check first when your income drops for the glory of God. Forgive that insensitive person who was critical about your best effort at a task for your church. But for Heaven's sake, don't quit! Jesus never said it would be easy. But He did say, "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life" (Revelation 2:10).

The bottom line of faithfulness, beloved, is look to Jesus!! The writer of Hebrews says, "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily besets us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 12: 1-2). Jesus performed the greatest act of service ever, His death on the cross for our sins, with the greatest obstacle ever – all the forces of hell in full blown attack to stop Him.

And so, beloved, when the obstacles would turn you around and cause you to quit pursuing your God-given dream, then keep your eyes on Jesus and let His faithfulness inspire you and His grace empower you. But not only must you keep your eyes on Jesus, but also you must keep your nose in the Word (Romans 10:17). And then keep your tongue in His praises. Revelation 12:11 says that the saints overcame the devil by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony. They were continually praising God for what He had done for them. And when you do keep your eyes on Jesus and your nose in His Word and your tongue in His praises, then you'll keep your hand to the plow. You won't quit your race.

But I want us to notice something else about Jonathan and his dream. And that is, **Jonathan had an indispensable partner in the work**, and that partner was his armorbearer. In those days an armorbearer went into battle with his commander and was right at his side at all times, and it was imperative that he was supportive of him, emotionally and physically. And Jonathan's armorbearer was certainly both of these. Look at verse 7. This man said, "My lord, whatever you wish to do, go for it. I'm in". Oh, how important it is for you and me to have an armorbearer! Someone to encourage us in our battles, like Aaron did for Moses, or Deborah did for Barak, or Barnabas did for Paul. And if God gives you a vision for something great, seek out a godly companion to join you in your quest. Someone to pray for you, someone who will encourage you, and even yoke up with you and fight with you. That's what Jonathan's armorbearer did. Look down at verse 13. Notice that the Philistines fell before Jonathan; he wounded them. But it was the armorbearer that killed them.

Who can be a good armorbearer? Well, every one of us who are married ought to be an armorbearer for our spouse. We should be encouraging them in all they are doing for Jesus, and we should join in with them in any way we can. But an armorbearer can be anyone who loves you and loves Jesus. So seek out an armorbearer, and seek to be one for someone else. Armorbearers can make the difference.

But I want us to see a beautiful spiritual application here. For we can see in this armorbearer a symbol of Someone more than just a man. Who is the one Person in your life that never leaves you nor forsakes you? Who is it that encourages you in your daily battles when no one else is around, when no one else cares? It is the Holy Spirit. John 14:26 says that the Holy Spirit is the Comforter, and that word means that He is the one who is called to one's side to help, to comfort, to assist. And when God calls you to rethink possible and step out and attempt something miraculous for Him, it is the Holy Spirit of God that will encourage you the most to do it, and Who will implant in your heart the faith to do it. But not only that, just like it was Jonathan's armorbearer who actually killed the Philistines, it is the Holy Spirit that accomplishes the dream you've set out to pursue. What a blessing! God hasn't called us to do His work. Hello, we **can't** do the work of God. Only God can do God's work. But God has said, "If you step out in faith, I'll let you in on what I'm doing. I'll accomplish My work **through** you". And He does it through your armorbearer, the Holy Spirit.

We've seen that when you pursue a God-given dream you must **ignore the naysayers**. And we've seen that you must **overcome the obstacles**, and we've seen that you should **enlist a partner**. And we've seen that we already have the precious Holy Spirit to encourage us and win for us the victory. Now, I want us to see what happens when that victory comes. And that is, **God's kingdom expands**. Look at verse 15 & 16. Friends, when the Philistines saw that Jonathan and his armorbearer had killed 20 of them, they went into full blown panic. Everywhere a Philistine soldier was stationed there was panic. They were running around like chickens with their heads cut off. Verse 20 says they were so confused they started killing one another. And the trembling was so bad that even the earth began to quake and tremble with them. It was God's exclamation point!!!

Oh, beloved, so much of the time we give the devil more respect than he deserves!! Yes, he is a roaring lion, but only as we choose to cower down to him. In reality he is a toothless tiger. For James tells us that if we resist the devil he will flee from us. And when you or I will rethink possible, when we will grab hold of a dream that God has given us and pursue it with all of our hearts and trust God to see it happen, we will send the devil fleeing from us just like the Philistines fled from Jonathan.

But there is something else that happens when God accomplishes something supernatural through you. God's people will also be strengthened. Verses 17-23 tell us that after seeing Jonathan's victory that Saul and his army gained courage and went out to engage the enemy. And joining them were Israelites that prior had defected to the Philistines. And joining all of them were Israelites who had just deserted and were holed up in the mountains in fear. And verse 23 says that as a result of all of these coming together and chasing down the frenzied Philistines, the Lord saved Israel. All because one man had a passion for God's honor and learned how to rethink possible.

Friends, there is not a person in this room today that God does not want to rethink possible. You may be here this morning and your life is falling apart. You're in a bad relationship, you're in a bad job, you're home is in shambles, you've got no real friend. I want to tell you that Jesus Christ loves you and is here to bring you victory in any of these situations. He may or may not change your situation, but He will flood your heart with love and give you peace and joy in the midst of it, I assure you. But you need to confess that you have sinned against Him and you need His forgiveness and salvation. You need to come to Him as a guilty sinner and cry out for mercy, because you are a guilty sinner. The Bible says, "There is none righteous, no, not one". And the Bible says that the punishment for your sins is eternal death in hell. "For the wages of your sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord". And today Jesus wants you to simply turn from your sins and receive Him by faith as your Savior and Master and be saved.

And for every one of you who are God's child, God loves you as His precious child and has something **supernatural** planned for your life. Something supernatural for His glory. Do you believe it? It is true!! God wants you to see it and say to yourself, "It is possible! And I'm going to trust God and step out in faith and do it, for my armorbearer, the Holy Spirit, is with me". I'm going to ask you to do something. You may not know what God is calling you to do just yet. It may be big or it may be small in the eyes of the world. But the long range picture is fuzzy. But if you are willing for God to show it to you and by His strength to pursue it, and if the Holy Spirit is speaking to you, I ask you to come and kneel at this altar as a pledge to Him of that commitment. Come, and perhaps all of God's church will follow.