

# Gospel Shaped Life 4

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[ 0 : 00 ] If you have a Bible with you, then please turn with me to the first book of Samuel chapter 14, which you'll find on page 235 of your church Bibles.

In particular, I want to focus on the sixth verse of the chapter, but look at the chapter as a whole through the lens of this sixth verse.

Jonathan said to the young man who carried his armor, come, let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised, that is these uncovenanted, unbelieving, willfully rebellious Philistines.

It may be, or perhaps better, who knows, that the Lord will work for us, for nothing can hinder the Lord from saving by many or by few.

Let me set the context for you of these verses. We're round about the year 1000 BC. Saul has recently, or in recent past, been anointed the first king of God's covenant people.

[ 1 : 35 ] He was anointed with much hope and promise and prospect, but he is turning out to be not a triumph, but a tragedy.

He's turning out to be a half-hearted servant of God. And here in 1 Samuel 14, we have God's people, God's covenant people, cowering in fear before their enemies, the Philistines.

Some of them are hiding in holes of the ground. Saul himself is hiding in a pomegranate cave. They are intimidated by the military strength of the Philistines.

And they're cowering in fear. They don't know what to do. It's almost as if they're waiting for the inevitable to happen, for the Philistines to come and overwhelm them.

And in the midst of this time of apprehension and intimidation and fear, Jonathan, Saul's son, decides to do something.

[ 2 : 55 ] He doesn't tell his father, do you notice? He doesn't tell his father, the end of verse 1, but he did not tell his father. Now, why was that? Well, the Hebrew text doesn't tell us.

The Bible is very frustrating at times. I wonder if you find that. Hebrew narrative has this way of simply trundling on with the narrative.

And you want to almost stop it at times, shake it by the lapels and say, please, tell me what's going on here. But Hebrew narrative rarely pauses to make moral judgments.

It leaves us to join up the dots, as it were. We're not told why Jonathan doesn't tell his father what he's about to do.

Most probably because he knows that if he told his father, his father would forbid him. Don't be so reckless. Don't be so silly.

[ 3 : 55 ] What can you hope to accomplish? One man with an armor bearer against the mighty power of the Philistines. Don't be so foolish.

So Jonathan doesn't tell his father. But he takes his armor bearer, this young man who would have accompanied him, carried his armor, perhaps even his sword initially.

He says, I've decided to do something. Will you come with me? And the young man says, if you go, I'm going. And Jonathan says to him, who knows?

I don't know. Who knows what God might do? Jonathan's got no access to the secret counsels of God. Jonathan's got no idea what's going to happen.

But rather than do nothing, he's going to do something. He refuses to be intimidated by the Philistines, by their military might.

[ 5 : 01 ] Or by the inconvenient geography. Did you notice that the writer tells us that there was a rocky crag on the one side, verse 4, and a rocky crag on the other side.

The one crag rose on the north in front of Michmash, and the other in the south in front of Geba.

The writer is saying to us, not only was there military opposition, there was geographical opposition.

But Jonathan is not intimidated either by the military statistics of the Philistines, or by the inhospitable geography.

He refuses to be intimidated. And off he goes. He doesn't know. He has no word from a prophet telling him to go and do battle with the Philistines.

He's not had a vision in the night that says, Jonathan, God will be with you. Go forward in confidence. He doesn't know. But he says to his armor bearer, Come, let's go up.

[ 6 : 14 ] And go over to these uncircumcised Philistines. And that's a significant phrase, actually, which we may come to later. Who knows, he says.

Who knows? It may be the Lord will work for us. I don't know if I'm leading you to certain death. But who knows?

Our God, the Lord, can save by many or by few. And so they go.

And Jonathan says, if they say to us, stay there and we will come down to you, then that will be a sign to us from the Lord that we should retreat. But if they say to us, come up, come up, then we will take that to be a sign that the Lord is calling us to go forward and to vanquish these Philistine enemies.

And so the Philistines, they say to Jonathan, come up and we will show you a thing. We'll show you a thing. Ah, says the Lord, you're going to show them a thing.

[ 7 : 27 ] I'm going to show you a thing. And Jonathan goes up. And with his armor bearer, he begins to slaughter the Philistines in front of him.

And before long, there is a panic in the Philistine camp. And Saul hears the noise and he doesn't know what's going on. And he says, what's happening? Has someone left the camp?

Who is it? And the word comes back. It's your son, Jonathan, and his armor bearer. And so Saul, I suppose, bringing up the tale, begins to assemble his army of the remnants of his army.

You know we are told he is 600. Gideon, with half that number, smashed the Midianites. Saul's got double what Gideon had.

And he's hiding in a cave. And they go up. And before long, the Philistines are fighting one another. They don't know what's going on. There is a God-induced panic in the camp.

[ 8 : 37 ] And even the Hebrews who had gone over to the Philistines out of fear, verse 20 and 21, the Hebrews, Saul's own people who, out of fear for their lives, had deserted the army and gone over to the Philistines.

They're given a renewed courage. And they begin to fight against the Philistines. So the Lord saved Israel that day and the battle passed beyond Beth-Aban.

It's a wonderfully dramatic account of God using two young men, Jonathan and his armor bearer, to accomplish great things, unexpected things.

Whenever I read this passage, I think of William Carey, the great pioneer missionary to India who really is considered the father of modern-day Protestant evangelical missions, who memorably wrote in one of his journals, attempt great things for God, expect great things from God.

And that's what Jonathan is doing. He is attempting great things for God and expecting great things from God.

[ 10 : 14 ] I want to notice six very brief, simple truths that shine out of these verses. Number one.

The gospel-shaped life that we've been considering this weekend, the gospel-shaped life is an adventurous life. It's an adventurous life.

This is a story from a boy's own adventure. This is the stuff that adventure stories are made of.

Here is someone who has such confidence in God that he's ready and willing to be adventurous.

Now, as I said earlier, Jonathan has no access to the secret counsels of God. He doesn't know how this day is going to pan out. He doesn't know whether his life is going to end on the rocky crag of Bozes to the north or the rocky crag of Senna to the south.

He doesn't know what's going to happen. But he has resolved to do something. Inertia and passivity were not to rule the day.

[ 11 : 38 ] I think we can learn much from this young servant of the Lord and his readiness to be adventurous in the service of God.

Too often, we want all our I's to be dotted and our T's to be crossed before we venture forth into the work of the kingdom of God.

But here is someone who is adventurous. I've no doubt that his father and others would have said, Jonathan, this is reckless.

This is not well thought through. Look at the limitedness of your resources. Look at the greatness of the enemy raged against us.

But for Jonathan, the issue was very simple. God does not call his people to be passive.

[12:44] God does not call his people to stand back and to retreat and to hide in holes. God calls his people to go on, to go on, to look to him and to say with Jonathan, who knows?

The life of faith is wonderfully adventurous. Who knows? Who knows what God might do as we leave this place today and bump into someone unexpectedly?

Who knows what a catalyst that might be for the advance of the kingdom of God in this part of God's world? Who knows? Who knows? Be adventurous.

Be ready to grasp the opportunities that God brings to you. Tremblingly maybe, haltingly, fearfully perhaps, but be adventurous.

The second thing we see here is that the gospel-shaped life has unbounded confidence in God.

[13:50] And that's simply to develop this first point of the life of faith being adventurous. Where Jonathan says, it may be the Lord will work for us. For the Lord can save by many or by few.

He is a man who has unbounded confidence in God. He believes that God doesn't need a multitude to overwhelm the Philistines. God doesn't need vast resources in order to advance his kingdom. God is able to save by many or by few. Ultimately, God would save the world by one. And in a sense, Jonathan here is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Someone who has unbounded confidence in God. Who knows that one with God is a majority. Unbounded confidence in God.

That's why one of our great needs as we gather on the Lord's Day, right at the beginning of our service of worship as we had today, to have our eyes lifted above and beyond ourselves to who our God is, to his greatness, to have our minds and hearts saturated with the revelation of God in his word concerning who he is, his greatness, his majesty, his power, his dominion, his sovereignty.

[15:25] We need elevated thoughts of God. I think it was Martin Lloyd-Jones who said he could forgive a preacher anything as long as he gave me big thoughts of God.

And brothers and sisters, we need big thoughts of God if we're going to accomplish anything for God in our day and in our generation.

So we see here that the gospel-shaped life is adventurous. We see it has unbounded confidence in God. We see thirdly that the gospel-shaped life is always looking to serve the good of God's people. Why is Jonathan doing this? Well, we'll see in a moment he's doing it principally and preeminently for the glory of God, but he's doing it out of a concern for the people of God.

He is looking to serve the good of the covenant people of God. And that's one of the hallmarks of a gospel-shaped life.

[16:31] It's always asking itself, how can I better serve the people of God? How can I better use whatever gifts and talents and abilities and whatever else I possess, how can I use them better to minister to the needs of my brothers and sisters in Christ?

Because the gospel-shaped life is always looking beyond itself. That's why we see it preeminently in our Lord Jesus Christ. I have come not to be served, but to serve, and to give my life a ransom for many.

He was always seeking to do good to the people of God, to minister to their needs. And we see this with Jonathan.

There is a subtext here. He's not out for personal glory. He's not out to make a name for himself. He is out to help the people of God who are languishing.

And that's why in a congregation like this, we should always be asking ourselves, Lord, how can I today help my brothers and sisters?

[17:58] Use me, Lord, as your instrument to minister your kindness, your care, your love, your support, your financial support, your material support, to my brothers and sisters who are languishing.

The gospel shaped life is always looking to serve the good of God's people. And then fourthly, the gospel shaped life has the capacity to encourage and galvanize others.

You notice at the end of the section that when Jonathan and the armor bearer have gone up and they've been slaying Philistines left, right, and center and then there's a panic in the Philistine camp. We read now the Hebrews who had been with the Philistines before that time and who had gone up with them into the camp. Even they also turned to be with the Israelites who were with Saul and

Jonathan.

Jonathan's adventurous faith. Jonathan's readiness to risk his life was used by the Lord to galvanize the remnants of Saul's army and even to recover and restore those men who had gone over to the Philistines.

[ 19 : 27 ] You see, you just never know what one adventurous, risk-taking act of faith might do for other people as they want you. You just never know.

You just never know what God might be pleased to do through your readiness to be adventurous and to take risks in order to minister good and blessing to God's people.

Jonathan was used by God to galvanize and encourage and even recover and restore men who formerly had been hiding in holes and hiding in caves.

One man's godly, adventurous confidence in God was used to minister a new heart, a new resolve, love and fresh courage into lives that had been timorous and intimidated and fearful.

But then fifthly, notice that the gospel-shaped life is above all concern for God's honour. That's why I said to you that these words in the first half of verse 6 are so significant.

[ 20 : 57 ] Come, let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised. Circumcision was a mark of belonging to the covenant people of God.

It was a mark of coming into the covenant people and living under the covenant lordship of Yahweh. But the Philistines wanted nothing to do with that.

They didn't want Israel's God to be their God. They were living in willful, active, rebellion against God. You see, what animated Jonathan is not so much that the timorous, fearful, intimidated, pusillanimous Israelites might be galvanised and rise to their calling to fight for truth and righteousness.

What ultimately animated Jonathan was a concern for the honour of God. And so if you read this chapter and you end up thinking, why wasn't Jonathan a brave young man?

You've missed the whole point of it. It would be like reading 1 Samuel 17, David and Goliath, and end up thinking, my, what a great story about David's bravery.

[ 22 : 16 ] 1 Samuel 17 has nothing to do with David's bravery. Well, that's not quite true. It's got a little bit to do with David's bravery. What's it about 1 Samuel 17?

It's not really about David at all, is it? And the writer, whoever wrote the chapter, or the whole section, gives us little clues five times in 1 Samuel 17.

The same Hebrew verb appears, harap, meaning defy, defy, defy, defy, defy. Goliath, was defying God.

He was publicly defying Yahweh, the covenant God of Israel. And it's that that animates David. And the whole passage in 1 Samuel 17, yes, David, if you like, is the subtext.

But the great issue in 1 Samuel 17 with David and Goliath, is David's abhorrence that someone should so publicly defy Yahweh.

[ 23 : 27 ] And so it is here with Jonathan. What animates him? Are these uncircumcised, these men who are lauding it over the covenant people of God, who are blaspheming God?

God? The gospel-shaped life is a life concerned for the honor of God, for the glory of God.

That's why really the bottom line in a congregation like this, or any gospel-hearted, gospel-minded congregation is, is this for the glory of God?

Will this be for the honor of God? God? And all our actions in a congregation's life should always be tempered by, will this honor the Lord?

Will these words that I'm about to speak, will they honor my Savior? Or will they bring disgrace and dishonor to him? A gospel-shaped life is above all concern for God's honor, just as Jonathan was here.

[ 24 : 36 ] And sixthly, finally, the gospel-shaped life gives all the praise of the glory alone to God. Do you notice how this section ends in verse 23?

So, it's so hebraic, it really is. So, the Lord saved everyone. You think, excuse me, excuse me, it was Jonathan, I think, it was Jonathan and his armor-bearer, but they have disappeared from view. So, the Lord saved the drill. It's just the economy of words is just beautiful, dramatic, and profoundly theological.

And the writer is saying, yes, God raised up Jonathan. God raised up his armor-bearer. God used him as his means to accomplish his ends, but to God all praise and glory.

God gave him. I often think of Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 4, what do you have that you did not first receive, and if you received it, why do you boast?

[ 26 : 02 ] What do we have to boast about? Every virtue we possess, and every victory won, and every thought of holiness are his alone, so the Lord saved Israel that day.

Why are we jealous for the doctrine of the grace of God in Jesus Christ? Because it makes sense to whom alone the glory belongs.

Why does Paul, for example, at the beginning of his letter to the Galatians, call down a curse from heaven against those who are undermining justification by grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone?

You say, well the answer is obvious, because if you teach that in addition to faith in Christ we need to add good works of any kind, you're imperiling men's salvation.

Well that's true, but that's not what profoundly animates the apostle. When you add anything to Christ, you take away from the glory of Christ. The gospel shaped life delights, sweetly delights, to say to him all praise and glory.

[ 27 : 30 ] Not to us, O Lord, not to us, Psalm 115, but to your great name, be the praise and the glory.

Remember how Paul concludes his great magnificent exposition of the gospel at the end of Romans 11. Who has known the mind of the Lord?

Who has been his counselor? Who has ever given to God that God should repay him? For from him and through him and to him are all things.

to him be the glory. And that's why ultimately the defining hallmark of a gospel shaped congregation is that it gives all the glory to God.

To whom alone it belongs. It delights to acknowledge in its praise, in its worship, in its prayers, service, that he and he alone deserves all the praise.

[ 28 : 45 ] I love those closing words in verse 23. They're just so, so simple yet so profound. So the Lord saved Israel that day.

May God make us like Jonathan, our brother. Men and women ready to be adventurous because we have confidence in God that led us even more than Jonathan be like our Savior Jesus Christ, who by faith, remember, who by faith endured the cross despising its shame and is now seated at the right hand of God.

He is the ultimate prototypical adventurous man of faith who ventured into the darkness and death of this world with confidence in his Father and who vanquished all our enemies.

Jonathan should point us always to Christ. May God do so to his praise this morning.

Amen. Amen.