

Faith vs. Fear *I Samuel 13 & 14*

Have you ever felt like your back was up against the wall, with no way of escape?

That was the predicament Saul and his army found themselves in, described for us in I Samuel 13.

Saul had assembled 3000 men to fight against the Philistines, and they began preparing for battle...that is, until the Israelites laid eyes on the Philistine camp and panic set in! The enemy had soldiers "as numerous as the sand on the seashore", not to mention their 3000 chariots and 6000 charioteers (13:5). The Israelite army, on the other hand, looked more like farmers than soldiers! Because of the oppression and tyranny of the Philistines, not one weapon could be found in Israel except for the swords of King Saul and his son Jonathan; everyone else went to battle armed with plowshares, axes, and sickles. Faced with this scenario, Saul's army began melting away, running to hide in the surrounding caves and thickets, until only 600 men were left.

This battle seemed impossible to win. What would *you* do?

1. The Fear-based Response—Trust in Self

The prophet Samuel had told Saul to wait for him to come and sacrifice a burnt offering to the Lord before taking any action against the Philistines. But after waiting seven days, Saul decided that Samuel was taking too long. He feared that if he didn't take quick action to stem the tide of his disappearing forces, all hope would be lost. So, he took matters into his own hands and proceeded to sacrifice the burnt offering himself. Samuel arrived shortly afterward and was greatly dismayed. "What have you done?" asked Samuel. "You acted foolishly...you have not kept the command the Lord your God gave you". (13:11,13)

2. The Faith-based Response—Trust in God

A short time later, as the remaining Israelite soldiers cowered in fear within the camp, Jonathan too decided to take quick action...but his action was based on boldness and faith in God rather than fear. With his armor-bearer by his side, he set out to attack a nearby Philistine outpost. Though there were only two of them, Jonathan told his armor-bearer, "Perhaps the Lord will help us, for nothing can hinder the Lord. He can win a battle whether He has many warriors or only a few!" (14:6, NLT).

God did help Jonathan that day! He gave him a victory that set off a cosmic domino effect, leading to victory for the entire nation. God blessed his enthusiastic, risk-taking, wholehearted faith.

What battles are you facing? Here are a few I have faced that may be familiar to you also:

- the battle of busyness
- the battle of depression or discouragement
- the battle of fear
- the battle of complacency

The battle may seem impossible to win. What will *you* do?