



"...LET'S SEE WHAT GOD WILL DO."

by Pastor Tim Dodson

at JF Believers Church

in Menomonie, Wisconsin

on Wednesday December 16th, 2015

Is there a difference between "passion" and "emotion?" How should we resolve the questions, the dilemmas, the quandaries of our lives when we are consumed with excitement, fear, or zeal?

This chapter in the book of 1 Samuel has in it both the "how to" as well as the "how not to." The players are one King Saul who already had begun a slow unraveling when he previously moved in a rash emotional and impetuous manner instead of waiting on God, and his son Jonathan who was brave as well as wise in his actions. Indeed, this was *NOT* a case of "his father's son!"

Saul was like a lot of folks today; he was impulsive and seemingly controlled by his emotions. He embraced a lifestyle that repeatedly moved to *appease* God instead of moving to *please* God. Always looking for the angle...always seeking the inside track...always attempting to get God on board with his endeavors instead of truly seeking God for *HIS* plans and *HIS* timing!

Jonathan however was a man of faith. He apparently knew that God could and would do *anything* that was in Him to do. That God was not limited nor was He afraid! And we know this about him not because he *said* so, but because he *acted so* when backed against the wall. It is when we find him in intense situations that Jonathan shines. It is in these situations that we speak out the reality of who we really are! Showing his colors he purposely stepped into the fray here. Not attempting to put God in a "holy headlock"...not trying to get God to do what *HE* wanted, but rather moving in such a way that God could use him in whatever God chose to do!

There is a noticeable difference in how these events played out as well as how these two men...father and son, handled the unknown elements in their lives as such was lived out. For Saul there was confusion. There was *"carnal* confusion." For Jonathan there was boldness, trust and passionate zeal. Saul looked good when times were good, but melted into an irrational puddle when put to the test. Jonathan never operated outside of seeking for and the waiting on the Lord.

Again, for Saul there was *confusion*. Or at least that is what we *want* to call it. For that vernacular is passive and benign. It's a word that is strangely noble and human. We say "i'm confused..." when what we really so often mean is truthfully...as children of God anyway, rather, "I have no *peace*." Ahh! But we can't say that right? Because that phrase is to clearly have a far more demonstrative and emphatic response as a believer. We don't know what to do when we are "confused" but we know what we need to do when we "have no peace."

"Confusion" entails the lack of understanding the questions and grasping the clarity of the answers or possible outcomes, and therefore I can continue moving forward without flinching in some faux ignorance. "No peace" doesn't mean I know the outcome but rather I *DO* know all the pieces on the board, the parameters...the *rules* of the game and the scenarios that will or are likely to follow. It means as a child of God, He has taken away my "life peace." That "mojo" that comes with walking in the "zone"...the sphere of God's leading. When that *mojo* is absent and I know I need to stop and back up.

Let's look at Jonathan's methodology: He has a *desire*. He has a driven *want*, in this case, to seriously kick some Philistine butts. Of course that would seem like a "given" in the realm of God right? I mean, these were bad boys and had done some bad stuff to God's people, so it would naturally be God's plan to have Israel beat these guys down right? I mean God loves me so He would naturally want what would make me happy right?

To presume so would or *could* be the first mistake of a whole chain of disasters leading ultimately to crushing defeat. Whenever we presume to know the mind of God before He has clearly expressed it, we are setting ourselves up for a serious humbling and maybe a serious spanking too.

Remember how to find God's will!

...*one*, what has He *already said* in His word?

Two, what is He saying through the voices of those you have grown to trust and respect...those who speak into your life? In this case, it sounds like one of those was Jonathan's armor bearer.

Three, how does it play out? What will it really look like as I move forward?

Four, does my decision call me to compromise my calling, the foundational characteristics and immovable elements of my personal spiritual roots...what I have always known to be fact in my life and purpose?

And lastly, *five*, what does my heart say? Not my emotions, my *heart*. And unless I can tell the difference between those two, I don't move on number 5 at all.

Jonathan sought the will of God and was allowing God to shut the door or fling it open wide. I don't know that I would encourage anyone to use his methodology, but God was not nearly as vocal then as now, as **we** have access to the Holy Spirit of God to lead us! But even so, we must actually be listening! Jonathan used a classic period methodology to allow God to speak into the situation. And in this case, God said "yes." God said "*move ahead...I got your back.*" I will always wonder how often God says such specifically *because* we asked?

Jonathan did indeed therefore move out in faith. He acted in strength and focus. Did he know exactly what was going to happen? *No*. He knew just that he had the peace of God, and God had answered his enquiry clearly and without ambiguity! And where was Saul in contrast? Saul had withdrawn from the scene. He had begun to isolate himself. He was not in the battle...not on the front, but rather on the outskirts of town camped out under a pomegranate tree. The picture quickly comes into a focus. A picture a leader having pulled back in fear and indecisiveness. In other words, right where Satan wanted him!

One must certainly ask what in the world Jonathan was thinking trying to take on the whole of the Philistine army by himself! From the outside, it looks like a suicide mission. But to Jonathan it was merely stepping into the realm of an "all-things-are-possible" God. He wasn't promised that he wouldn't die. He wasn't promised that there would be a God ordained earthquake to back him up. He didn't know what the end result would look like. He just knew that "all his ducks were in a row" and he had God's anointing on his movements. The rest was God's business.

What Jonathan was moving to do was not out of character for him. He was a soldier! God had prepared the day for Him. Jonathan wasn't suggesting that he and his armor bearer head on home and start being a florist. God had prepared his steps before him *in light of the soldier he was*. His life road had brought him to this moment for which God would now pour out His grace and glory to magnify Jonathan's passion and service! Jonathan looked forward in faith because he could look behind him with awe and worship!

But Saul? He still was unsure of who he was apparently. Was he a soldier and a king? Or was he still the guy that was "hiding amongst the baggage" in 1 Samuel 10:22? You see faith comes out of knowing who God is and who YOU are! In that understanding there is spiritual rest. And out of spiritual rest comes spiritual confidence, even if such does not satisfy your emotional need or give you the answers that you want: the "why" which we feel should naturally follow the "what."

Once Saul was in motion, he compounded his problems by make rash promises...impulsive vows. In a feeble attempt to again "*appease God*," he made promises...silly promises really, in hopes of gaining God's favor..in order to try to get God "on board." Of course the whole idea is crazy! If Saul could just see what was going on down the road with Jonathan, he would not think it necessary to try to get God "on his side!"

Sadly, his foolishness would come back to haunt him in the very near future, as it would be his own son Jonathan who would fail Saul's vow...his words, and would actually be "thrown under the bus" by Saul...his own father. Sadly, I have seen such ego-centric actions so many times that I have lost count. Those who once said they loved us, but kicked us to the curb when God didn't come through like they wanted and they had to blame someone...

Saul had approached God with a carnal spirit. He "asked with the wrong heart" as James speaks of in chapter 4, verse 3 of his letter. Saul tried to **make** something happen...what HE thought should happen, instead of letting God lead, and he made promises that could cost him a lifetime of regret and remorse. Saul made a vow that essentially went like this: "*God,... we will earn our intervention through our works...our fasting from food. If we do that, well then of course you will come to the rescue, right?*"

"Hey Saul...God had already COME to the rescue, and didn't need to you to make it happen!"

In the end...when God had done what He was going to do anyway, Saul found out that Jonathan had eaten some honey along the way in the midst of the battle. And of course, Saul felt that he had to follow through with his crazy vow and sentenced Jonathan to death. A little capital punishment for eating honey, never mind that it was at **his** hand that this whole victory played out! The idea of such would seem to be ludicrous if it didn't happen so much today! Instead of getting out of the speeding car that is heading for the cliff, we take the position of "*well, I said I was going to do this, so I guess I will go down with the ship!*"

There are no doubt countless individuals that are living out the remainder of their lives in pain and sorrow because they just kept going against God's plan and now are stuck in the life of their own making. Saul, like Jonathan wanted to see the Philistines defeated, but Saul's approach was very different than Jonathans. Saul wasn't as interested in seeing what GOD would do as he was to see what God could help HIM do! It was about HIM and HIS plan, not God's. And He didn't want to give God any "wiggle room" to vary from the plan he had written in his head. So he made a vow. A stupid promise that almost cost him the life of his son!

This incident and that of the butchering the animals according to Jewish law shows us that Saul was obsessed with law and surely it was because he hoped to curie favor from God by his works. We know this because we see often throughout Saul's life his inconsistent faithfulness. His obedience...however clownish it appeared at times, was his attempts gain favor from God. But God wanted HIM, just like God wants US! Certainly holiness is an issue. However, seeking a walk with Christ and love for Him always has an effectual secondary result: *it causes us to seek with all our hearts to be like Him and walk like Him*

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Saul had the idea that he and the army of Israel would make nighttime raid against what was left of the Philistines. The priest wanted to seek God on the matter, and so Saul agreed. But strangely, God wasn't talking. Why? One can only surmise what God was thinking herein, but we do know that God has said in Psalms 66:18 that "if we hold onto sin, He will not hear us." And Saul was bent on pursuing the road he was on, even as God was throwing roadblocks in his way throughout.

Saul had been dis-trustful of God. He had exercised a very narrow and self-serving version of a plan that on the outside looked righteous, but Saul was usurping God's place as the "general-in-charge." He had been disobedient, and he simply wasn't listening. He built an altar that was for sacrificing animals according to Levitical law. But that too was prohibited by God to be done in such a manner! It was prohibited but compromise was an intrinsic part of all that Saul was doing. "Looking good" and getting the end result that he wanted was the motivation. Never was *pleasing God at any cost* the mo' behind his actions...never was glorifying God no matter the outcome!

God intervened in Saul's plans and kicked him down. For Saul fully intended...out of positional pride and hard heart, to follow through with his vow and therefore execute Jonathan. But all those around Saul essentially said "that ain't gonna happen dude..." Those who should have admired and respected Saul and the life he led and the decisions he made, were instead having to step up and say "we're not a part of this...we are not backing you." That should be one of the greatest wake-up calls of our lives. But sadly, such was not the case with Saul. He was on a non-stop journey to disaster with occasional stopovers in chaos.

God gave Saul so many opportunities to pull up, but it just never happened and we are in the midst of the story of the sad demise of a man God had once placed his hand on. This is a story played out over and over, and there are many today who are sidelined from the game and are still fast-tracking to their personal movie credits...having never known what God had for them...having never known the magnitude of the plans that He has for us! Jeremiah 29:11 tells us: "*For I know the plans I have for you,*" says the LORD. "*They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.*"

Pr 19:21 *There are many plans in a man's heart, Nevertheless the LORD'S counsel—that will stand.*

In the end, one must ask: *Who are you going to trust?*