

# Faith as small as a mustard seed (1 Sam 13:16-14:14 & Matt 17:14-20) <sup>1</sup>

9-Jun-19

G'Day everyone.

It would be great to have your Bibles opened up to 1 Samuel 13, from verse 16 and we're going through to chapter 14, verse 14.

There's an outline for you to jot down notes if you wish.

Let's ask God to give us His understanding before we begin

Let's pray...

## Recap

So to begin with, let's remind ourselves of King Saul's mission from 1 Samuel 10:16

### [PowerPoint 1a-Recap]

- This is the mission God gave to the prophet Samuel about Saul's mission - "Anoint him [Saul] ruler over my people Israel; he will deliver them from the hand of the Philistines. I have looked on my people, for their cry has reached me."
- And we saw last week that Saul was supposed to wait for the prophet Samuel to come to make the sacrifice to the Lord - and tell him what to do next in 1 Sam 10:8

### [PowerPoint 1b-1 Samuel 10:8]

"Go down ahead of me to Gilgal. I will surely come down to you to sacrifice burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, but you must wait seven days until I come to you and tell you what you are to do

- But as we saw last week - Saul was impatient - he didn't trust the Lord - he trusted in himself and wanted to please his soldiers who were deserting him - instead of pleasing God - and so Saul made a sacrifice to God - which only Samuel was meant to do
- The consequences of this were that - his royal dynasty would not continue - King Saul but be the first and last King of his family line

## Intro/Faith?

The bottom line is Saul didn't have *faith* in God

What is faith?

### [PowerPoint 2-Faith defined]

- **Dictionary** - complete trust or confidence in someone or something
- **Bible** - Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see (Hebrews 11:1 NIV)

So, faith in God is trusting God - even when we can't necessarily prove it or explain it [e.g. Believing God created everything, Believing He is in control of everything and trusting God in all situations]

It's all very well to say we should have faith

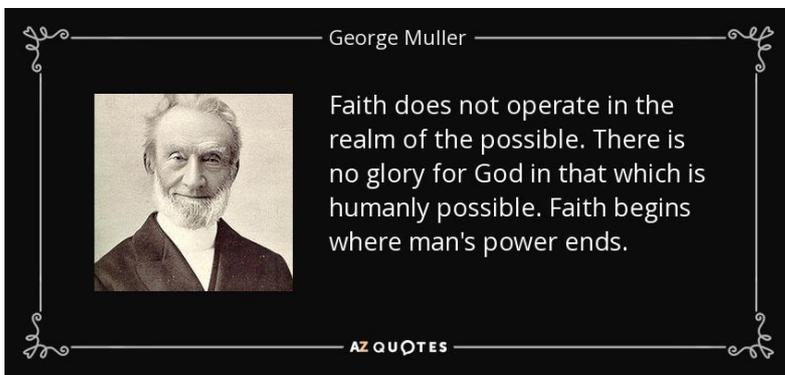
But what about when the situation we're in seems hopeless

[Illustration of George Mueller - 1805-1898 - a great example of a man of faith  
George had a heart to help orphans - he began an orphanage in Bristol - and never once asked for funding - he had faith that God would always provide - In

the early days of his first orphanage - he got the children to sit down for breakfast - and give thanks to God for the food - even though there was no food - they'd run out. After giving thanks - a knock on the door - the baker had baked too much bread - a few minutes later - a knock on the door - the milkman's cart had lost a wheel - and the milkman gave George the leftover milk]

George described faith this way:

[PowerPoint 3-George]



George believed God was always there even in hopeless situations...

### Hopeless Situation (1 Samuel 13:16-22)

Speaking of hopeless situations

In our OT reading from 1 Samuel 13:16-22 [Please turn there now]

The situation was pretty bleak for Saul and the people of Israel

[PowerPoint 4a-Map]

- Saul and Jonathan and the Israelite army were at Gibeah (blue)
- 3 raiding parties (v17-19) of the Philistines had moved into position to attack the Israelites. Basically, the Philistines were boxing the Israelites in - [Explain MAP - 3 red areas]

### [PowerPoint 4b-Worst Still]

- Worst still - there were no blacksmiths in Israel (v19) - therefore the Israelites couldn't make any weapons
- Worst still - the Philistines had a monopoly on blacksmiths - so they were in control of what weapons the Israelites could make
- The only weapons the Israelites had were farming tools - and they had to pay the Philistines to sharpen them (v20-21)
- So, the bottom line was - no soldier in Saul's army had a sword or a spear - except Saul and his son Jonathan (v22)
- It was a hopeless situation!

But remember - the mission God had given Saul was to deliver the Israelites from the hand of the Philistines

### [PowerPoint 5-Rom 8:31]

And remember also - as the Apostle Paul reminds us in Rom 8:31 - "*if God is for us, who can be against us?*"

(pause)

### **A Small amount of Faith (1 Samuel 13:23- 14:14)**

Then as if matters can't get worst

### [PowerPoint 6-Map]

In v23 a detachment of the Philistines was mobilized at the Pass at Mikmash - see Map.

### [PowerPoint 7-Small amount of Faith]

But Saul's son, Jonathan seems to recognize two things:

- First - that God's plan [mission] is for the Israelites to be delivered from the Philistines [who remember worshipped false gods]
- And, second - that God is with His people, the Israelites

So, in verse 1 of chapter 14 - Jonathan stepped out in faith with his young armour bearer - to confront the Philistines

Meanwhile King Saul (in v2) was sitting under a pomegranate tree - Saul was totally inactive - it's like - because he's been in trouble for taking the initiative and making the sacrifice, last week - he's now taking no initiative at all - yet he knows the mission God gave him

By this stage, Saul had only got 600 men now - and with him was a priest named Ahijah - the nephew of Ichabod. Why are we told this, perhaps because Ichabod's name means "the glory has departed" - an indication that Saul's royal glory has almost gone.

Also no one was aware that Jonathan had left (v3)

In comparison to Saul's inaction - Jonathan was active and embraced the mission against the Philistines

See v4-5 - Jonathan had to cross a pass with a cliff on each side - [Map]

Jonathan showed great trust in the Lord

His plan was to attack the Philistines outpost - and he referred to the Philistines as uncircumcised - in v6 - in other words the Philistines were not God's people - only the circumcised - the Israelites - are God's people

Jonathan firmly believed - v6 - that nothing could hinder the Lord from saving the Israelites, whether by many soldiers or just a few soldiers [like story of Gideon]

If God is for us, who can be against us?

In v7-10 - Jonathan and his armour bearer are on the same page - they planned their strategy very well - see v10 - Jonathan said "if the Philistines say 'Come up to us' we will climb up, because that will be our sign that the Lord has given them into our hands"

Jonathan showed complete faith in God - with no doubting whatsoever  
We can his faith, by the fact that Jonathan and his companion climbed up the cliff - in v11-13 - which needed both hands - so they can't use weapons and defend themselves, whilst climbing - and again he stated his trust in the Lord in v12 - "the Lord has given them into the hand of Israel"

Jonathan and his armour bearer were successful and won a victory - 20 Philistines were killed

Jonathan's small amount of faith - was enough for victory  
Because he was tapping into God's power

### [PowerPoint 8-secret weapon]

If God is for us who can be against us?

Jonathan's secret weapon - is God!

We have that same secret weapon in our lives

Hopeless situations are not a problem to God

(pause)

### Another hopeless situation (Matthew 17:14-19)

As we move to our NT passage - please turn there now - Matt 17:14-20

There's another hopeless situation?

### [PowerPoint 9-Hopeless situation]

- There is a boy who has seizures - and is suffering greatly (v15)
- These seizures (a bit like epilepsy) - put the boy in danger - he's often falling in the fire [burnt] or in the water [drowning]
- The boy's father is desperate for his son to be healed!
- Men don't normally throw themselves at someone's feet and beg
- Especially in front of their sons - it's not a blokey thing to do
- Apparently, the disciples haven't been able to heal the boy
- Yet back in Matthew 10:1 it says: Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.
- So, Jesus' reaction in v17 - "You unbelieving and perverse generation" – "how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? - Jesus' reaction is directed not just at the people in general - but the disciples as

well - even though they have been given authority to do this type of healing

- Then Jesus heals the boy - in v18 - rebuking the demon inside the boy
- So, what is the problem? Why couldn't the disciples heal the boy?

### Faith of a mustard seed (Matthew 17:20)

#### [PowerPoint 10-Faith]

- Jesus tells them why? In v20
- Because they have so little faith - He says
- They had the authority - but Jesus is saying - you doubt this authority
- Perhaps the disciples have started to believe in themselves and not in the power and authority of Jesus
- And Jesus says all we need is the ***smallest amount of faith - faith the size of a mustard seed*** - the smallest seed you can get
- A tiny mustard seed grows in to a very large tree
- The point Jesus is making - is that the tiniest amount of faith - grows into the largest result - as that tiny amount of faith - taps into the great power of God
- So, it's not a matter of the disciples - or us - having more faith
- It's a matter of understanding
  - The ***object of our faith*** - is not ourselves - nor others - the object of our faith is the power of God
  - And it's not a matter of having a massive amount of faith - Jesus says we only need a tiny amount - ***a mustard seed amount***

- The point is that *tiny amount of faith has to be sincere - genuine - not doubting*
- Then mountains can be moved
- Not literally moving mountains - but mountains here represent the obstacles that stop our faith - being genuine - obstacles that make us doubt God
- If God is for us - who can be against us?
- Nothing is impossible for God
- The obstacle for the disciples was themselves - their doubt - their understanding of what Jesus was on about - which is why he says - how long do I have to stay here - till you get it?
- In fact, it was only when Jesus died, rose, ascended and then they received the Holy Spirit - that the disciples finally got it
- As Christians, we have that same Holy Spirit living inside us - do we get it?

(pause)

### **Application**

Applying this to our lives today

#### **[PowerPoint 11-Application]**

- Faith is not getting our own way and manipulating God - and asking God for what we want
- Faith is asking for God's will to be done - like we do in the Lord's prayer - *"Your will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven"*
- Faith is trusting in God's power not ours - e.g. saying to ourselves "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Phil 4:13)

- Faith is not about the amount - Jesus says the opposite - the smallest amount will do - as long as it's genuine and sincere faith - God will move the mountains - God will remove the obstacles
- Ultimately - it's our faith *in Jesus' power* over sin and death - that wins us the battle against sin and death - and gives us forgiveness and eternal life - it's not our doing - in fact - according to Ephesians 2:8 - even our faith is a gift from God
- Like Jonathan - we need to step out in faith - and tap into God's power
- Like David did with Goliath - like Joshua did when he marched around Jericho

During our growth groups this week - some of us grappled with how our faith - works in with *God's will*

### [PowerPoint 12-Case Studies]

So, I'd like to do 4 very short case studies - which hopefully covers those nagging and lingering questions - we might have had after the Bible study...

### [PowerPoint 12a-Case Study1]

**Case Study 1 - I'm so hurt by what happened to me - I can never forgive him or her - does that mean my faith is lacking?**

- God calls us to forgive - in fact in Matt 6 (vv14-15) - Jesus says if we don't forgive - God won't forgive us. So, God's will for us is to forgive. Sometimes the person who hurt us - doesn't apologize - so we don't get

the opportunity to accept their apology - but we can still be prepared to forgive and have the mindset to forgive.

The problem comes though when we can't forgive because we're too hurt. Mark 11:12-25 deals with forgiveness - and says our faith can move mountains. Our struggle to forgive someone is like a mountain - that needs to be moved. Our faith in Jesus - means we can believe - not in our power to forgive - but believe in the power of Jesus to remove that mountain/obstacle that's in the way and preventing us from forgiving. That faith doesn't have to be massive - just mustard seed size - but that faith just needs to be genuine, heartfelt and sincere - not doubting

### [PowerPoint 12b-Case Study 2]

**Case Study 2 - What's the point in having faith and praying if God's in control of everything and His will - will always be done?**

- God did not make us as robots - programmed to do exactly what he wants. Instead, because He loves us - He gave us freedom to make our own choices - and He encourages us to make the right choices - including the right choice to have faith in Him in all things
- God also created us as relational beings - and wants a relationship with us
- We can't have a good relationship with someone if we never talk to them
- It's the same with God - he wants us to talk to Him in prayer
- We don't know God's will in all things - so, as we talk to Him - He reveals His will to us

- For example - The Bible says it's God's will for us to evangelize - so in faith - we can come to Him - and ask Him to provide opportunities to share our faith in Jesus
- Also - God's will is not so - rigid - that it is not flexible - For example God promised Abraham a child - and even though Abraham and Sarah took matters into their own hands (and Ishmael was born) - God's will was still done - and the promised child - Isaac - was still born. Instead of taking matters into their own hands - Abraham and Sarah could have prayed that they would not doubt God's promise.

### [PowerPoint 12c-Case Study 3]

**Case Study 3 - What if we pray in faith for someone who is very sick, to be healed, and they die? Does that mean our faith is weak? And what's the point in praying if God doesn't answer?**

- We can only pray according to God's will - what God would want to happen - not what we would like to happen - Jesus did the same thing in the Garden of Gethsemane - "your will Father, not my will"
- God will only move the mountains that He wants removed
- God has sovereign purposes - if the person we prayed for dies - that person's death might lead others to Jesus for example [Mallinson's]
- Also, if the person dies it will be the end of their suffering - rather than perhaps staying alive and suffering more
- Ultimately for a Christian who dies - death is the end of their suffering, pain and tears - and leads to the ultimate healing of eternal life - full of peace and joy - living with God forever - in Heaven

## [PowerPoint 12d-Case Study 4]

### Case Study 4 - should we step out in faith or wait for God to tell us?

In our OT passage today - Saul - seemed to be waiting on God - yet he already knew God's will and what his mission was. Jonathan on the other hand - acted on the mission and stepped out in faith and trusted God - step by step.

In our NT passage - the father of the boy who was having seizures stepped out in faith too.

Other examples of stepping out in faith - the woman with a bleed for 12 years touched the hem of Jesus' garment - her mustard seed faith was enough to be healed! Abraham obeyed God and went to sacrifice his son, Isaac - and Abraham believed God would provide the sacrifice and spare Isaac.

The bottom line is: if we believe on the promises in the Bible - things like God saying "I will never leave you or forsake you" - and things like "if God is for us, who can be against us" - can't we step out in faith - if what we're doing is in agreement with God's Word?

### Conclusion

The Conclusion: Faith is knowing God is in control - and He alone knows the whole plan - and faith is being content that we only know each step of the plan - as God reveals it to us - in His perfect timing.

## [PowerPoint 13-Conclusion]

As the Apostle Paul says:

For we live by faith, not by sight. (2 Cor 5:7)