

## The Jonathan Principal: Part 2

Valley Center Seventh-day Adventist Church

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Last week we began a study of Jonathan, the son of King Saul of Israel, and his initiative in launching an attack against the Philistines as recorded in I Samuel 13 and 14. It seemed as if we had just begun our study last Sabbath when time got away from us. Let's review a few of the basic features of the story as we continue today. Remember that at this time, about 1030 B. C., the Philistines had the upper hand, and had removed from Israel all tools with which they could sharpen iron, thus preventing them from manufacturing weapons of war.

"And the garrison of the Philistines went out to the pass of Michmash." I Samuel 13:23. Michmash was about 6 ½ miles north of Jerusalem. Both armies assembled and the battle would soon take place. But what could Israel do, with the enemy having such a pronounced advantage? With meager numbers and almost no weapons, any engagement of the enemy would surely, it seemed, result in disaster and death. Saul's army became paralyzed with fear and uncertainty.

At this very time, Jonathan, the son of King Saul, was stirred to do something. "Now it happened one day that Jonathan the son of Saul said to the young man who bore his armor, 'Come, let us go over to the Philistines' garrison that is on the other side.' It may be that the LORD will work for us. For nothing restrains the LORD from saving by many or by few." I Samuel 14:1, 2, 3-6.

The spirit of Jonathan, or should we say, the Spirit in Jonathan, spurred him from the restraint that had fallen on the Israelite army and compelled, propelled him to take action. He proposed to his armor bearer that they ascend between two large rock faces or cliffs guarding the entrance to the ravine of Michmash, called Bozez ("shining") and Seneh ("acacia"). "Nothing restrains the LORD from saving by many or by few." Where did he get such an idea as that? Maybe the story of their forefather Abraham had come into Jonathan's mind, when God said, "Is anything too hard for the LORD?" Genesis 18:12, 13. Maybe he recalled the promise made by Moses, "Five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight; your enemies shall fall by the sword before you." Leviticus 26:8. Maybe Jonathan brought to mind the story of Gideon, when God saved Israel by the hand of a few against the mighty hordes of Midian.

His armor bearer agreed with him and said, "I'm with you on this." Though Jonathan felt convicted that this was what God wanted him to do, he proposed a very simple test to obtain further evidence that he was on the right path. We read, "Then Jonathan said, 'Very well, let us cross over to these men, and we will show ourselves to them. If they

say thus to us, "Wait until we come to you," then we will stand still in our place and not go up to them. But if they say thus, "Come up to us," then we will go up. For the LORD has delivered them into our hand, and this will be a sign to us." I Samuel 14:8-10. This would be a very simple test, a "Gideon's fleece," to determine if God's blessing would be with them.

"So both of them showed themselves to the garrison of the Philistines. And the Philistines, said, 'Look, the Hebrews are coming out of the holes where they have hidden.' Then the men of the garrison called to Jonathan and his armor bearer, and said, 'Come up to us, and we will show you something.'" I Samuel 14:11, 12. Jonathan knew by their response that his prayer had been answered and that the Lord's blessing would accompany their efforts.

They managed to climb up unnoticed and successfully attacked a small number of the Philistines, about twenty of them. But then something amazing happened. "And there was a trembling in the camp, in the field, and among all the people. The garrison and the raiders also trembled; and the earth quaked, so that it was a very great trembling." I Samuel 14:15. When Jonathan stepped out in faith and did what he could, the Lord accompanied his efforts with divine blessing in the form of an earthquake that threw the company of the Philistines into a panic.

King Saul, being shaken from his stupor, summoned the army into action. More than that, there were Israelites who had fled from Saul's army and found refuge in the rocks and hills, as well as Hebrews who had gone over to the side of the enemy and were now among the Philistines who joined Saul's ranks and fought with him. "Moreover the Hebrews who were with the Philistines before that time, who went up with them into the camp from the surrounding country, they also joined the Israelites who were with Saul and Jonathan. Likewise all the men of Israel who had hidden in the mountains of Ephraim, when they heard that the Philistines fled, they also followed hard after them in the battle." Verses 21, 22.

We introduced the thought last week that there are four classes of soldiers who collaborated in the battle that day. What were the four categories? First, there was Jonathan and his armor bearer who led the way. Second, there was Saul and the rest of the army, professing to be ready for warfare, who were lounging under the pomegranate trees, frozen in fear. Thirdly, there were soldiers who had fled to find safety in the mountains and hills, and fourthly, there were ones who had actually joined with the enemy. The good news is that when the battle came, they cooperated together to defeat the enemy, by God's grace. Ultimately, it was not Saul, nor his army, nor even Jonathan who won the battle. It was God. "So the LORD saved Israel that day." Verse 23.

A wonderful story, but how can it help us today? We find ourselves in a battle between Satan and Christ, with each one of us facing a choice between these two. Having chosen the side of Christ, we are invited to battle the enemy. What is the battle about? It is about ideology; a way of thinking. It is about the truth of God. Remember that the central truth of the universe is God; His existence; His character and His government. Satan is in the business of promoting "the lie;" the denial of God's existence, His character and His government.

Jesus defeated the devil at every step and signed his death warrant on the cross. He then told us to share the truth with everyone. "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Matthew 28:19, 20. We are commissioned to be involved in the battle, laboring as co-workers with Christ.

This battle finds us today, in the closing scenes of the war, with the instruction to share the truth with the world. Representing this work, John saw an angel in the sky with a message to give to everyone who lives on this planet. It is a message that is founded on the everlasting Gospel and invites all to "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him Who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water." Revelation 14:7.

These words contain our marching orders. We find in this language our job description. It is to share the Good News of the everlasting Gospel; that Christ has saved us from our sins; that on the cross He atoned for everyone's transgressions and now desires to implant power for victorious Christian living. Adding impetus to this message is the truth that we are now living in the time when the "hour of His judgment" *has* come; Heaven's record books are now being investigated to see whose names will remain in the Book of Life.

Of vital importance is the invitation to return to the worship of the Creator God, Who set aside one day and sanctified as the memorial of His creation, the seventh-day Sabbath. No other day received such a designation or honor. It is our duty, our privilege to share this truth with everyone, a truth that is designed and calculated to prepare a people ready to meet the Lord.

But the job seems so big! To warn the world--how can I do that? It seems as daunting and formidable as trying to dry up the ocean by standing on the shore and tossing rocks into it. The enemy seems to have the upper hand, the visible advantage, all the weapons, just as in the story of Jonathan and his armor bearer. We are tempted to wonder, How will the task be finished? How will everyone on this planet have an opportunity to know the truth for these times and make an intelligent decision for God? The job seems so big that it can't be done. It seems as impossible as what faced Saul and his army.

The good news today is that you and I are not to worry about exactly how this message will circle the globe. The Bible says, "He will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness." Romans 9:28. Does that mean that we should pursue a life of ease and seek out a "pomegranate tree" under which to recline, as did Saul? No! It's true that with the scope of the battle, it's all too easy to do nothing!

Be a Jonathan! Do something! Be it ever so small, make a start for God. What can you do to become involved in the battle? First, commit your life to God every day. Pray that God will give you a new experience; a new way of thinking. Feed on His Word daily to establish and maintain the vital connection with Him. Ask Him to teach you what you should do. He will suggest ways and means. You will find doors of opportunity open to share with others. I know this to be true.

In this story we find Jonathan's simple strategy. What did it entail? First, he and his armor bearer "showed themselves" to the Philistines. Notice again the conversation: "Then Jonathan said, 'Very well, let cross over to these men, and we will show ourselves to them.'" I Samuel 14:8. They made themselves known. What does that mean for us? I was impressed to hear the conversion story of Walter Veith, the atheist and evolutionist zoological professor who became a believer in Creationism and Seventh-day Adventist. How did that happen? Among other things, he wanted to remodel his house and so called upon a gentleman who built cabinets. When the man came to his house to scope out the job (at this time Walter had almost no interest in religion), the contractor introduced himself and said, "By the way, I walk with the Lord."

Walter wasn't prepared for such a statement as that, but said something like, "If you can build me some new kitchen cabinets, that will be just fine." The man, sensing that further talk on that matter was not going to happen at that time said, "May I leave this with you." He had come prepared with a small pamphlet. Because he was a nice guy, Walter took the leaflet and stuck it in a drawer. It would be a year before he came upon that pamphlet again, which simply listed the Ten Commandments as given in the Catholic Catechism, the Lutheran Catechism and the Bible. Walter was shocked but intrigued by the differences, and was led to look up in a Bible to see whether these things were so. Through the process of time, Walters heart and life were changed, and he became a soldier of God's truth.

That cabinet maker who "walked with the Lord" will be smiling one day when he is introduced to the number of people who have found Christ through the ministry of Walter Veith. All because he "showed himself;" he made himself known. He shared a small pamphlet with a customer. Could you do something like that? Are we "known" by our neighbors, our co-workers? One of our members last Sabbath handed out 100 flyers to people in their neighborhood, inviting them to come to a Bible class beginning in their home. A "Jonathan" move if I ever saw it.

Do we take advantage of every opportunity to "show ourselves" as soldiers of the cross? I have come to see that there are scores of times each day in which there can be an opportunity for sharing. My prayer each morning is that God will direct me to someone with whom to share, and to recognize the opportunity as it unfolds, and to somehow find a way, through God's providence, to direct the conversation into a channel in which witnessing can occur.

Two Sundays ago Kevin, a member of our church, and I went door to door in the neighborhood around our church. We had no script. We just wanted to "show ourselves." Before we left, we knelt and prayed together in the foyer and gathered together a supply of literature and went out. When people came to the door, we simply introduced ourselves as members of the Seventh-day Adventist church, meeting our neighbors. We "showed ourselves." We made ourselves known.

The Lord blessed in our conversations and we were able to leave literature in nearly every home. We were able to pray with several of the people. We encountered a lady who, when she was a small child, had been brought to Sabbath School by her grandmother. One man invited us into his home and we spent nearly a half an hour

sharing. His wife came in as we were about to leave and we had a wonderful season of prayer together. This man is from Iran, but believes that Jesus is the true Messiah. We left a book and, of course, extended an invitation for them to come to church.

Angels of God will work with us if we step out in faith and "show ourselves." Allow me to share this thought with you. Where we live, there are certain places, certain intersections where it is not uncommon to see men gathered, hoping that someone will have work for them to do. Do you have such a place near where you live that is such a gathering place? When I drive by such a place, seeing these men available and waiting, my mind is drawn in another direction. Do you know that angels work with us when we share the Gospel? Angels join with us and walk by our sides, suggesting things to say, prompting us in our conversations when we share Jesus with others.

But I wonder, how many times are the angels gathered, waiting for the opportunity to work with us, and we "drive by" and continue with our busy lives. Could it be, that like the corners where men are gathered waiting to be called for labor, there are angels likewise, gathered, just waiting for us to become involved in labor so they can work with us? How many times I've "driven by" and left the angels standing!

A couple of weeks ago I was in the parking lot at a Henry's market. As I pulled into the lot, I parked right behind a car which had a bumper sticker that said something about "Jesus is Lord." I wondered what I might do to take advantage of that and use it as a springboard for sharing. While I was in the store I contemplated leaving a business card on the car with a short message on it. As I left the store with my groceries and made my way out to my car, I saw that a lady was putting her purchases into the trunk of her car. This was perfect! As I walked past her, I said, "Excuse me. I couldn't help but notice your bumper sticker about Jesus. That's wonderful. You must be a Christian."

Because not many people are used to having people come up and talk with them in these settings, I've found that speaking to people in parking lots and other such places can be a somewhat startling or even frightening experience. But if you speak in a soft pleasant voice, don't stand too close and have a ready smile, usually people will lose their fears. "Oh yes," she said. "I am a Christian." "What faith do you practice?" I asked. "I am a Catholic," she replied. "It is the only true church. We have the priests, we have the sacraments," she said as she pointed to her church across the street.

"Do you believe in the Bible?" I gently inquired. "Oh yes! The Bible, the Bible." "Are the Ten Commandments important?" I ventured a step further. "Oh yes, the Ten Commandments!" I went one more step: "Have you ever compared the Ten Commandments in the Bible to the Ten Commandments in the Catechism?" At this, the look on her face and the tone of her voice changed. "I just believe what they tell me. I don't get into anything like that." I felt it imprudent to go any further, but I pray that the Spirit will prompt her to some day make her own inquiry and follow God's truth for these last days. It would have been easy to walk right past her and get in my car, but I felt stirred by the Spirit to "do something."

I've begun to see that just by paying attention, there are ways in which conversations can be started which will lead to witnessing opportunities. Last week we took my brother-in-law to lunch for his birthday, and he pointed out to me someone sitting in the

Olive Garden restaurant who had something written on the back of his t-shirt. I turned, looked and read a message on this man's back which referred to the "For this is My blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." Matthew 26:28. It was in red ink, and the writing was printed so that the shape of a cross was formed. I walked over to the table and said, "Excuse me. Forgive me for interrupting, but I couldn't help but notice the Scripture on the back of your shirt." This led to a short conversation and I left him a card and invited him to visit our church website. Will these contacts produce results? I don't know. But I know it is my duty to "show myself" and bring to people's minds the truths for these times.

The name of our church can be a way of "showing ourselves." To be a Seventh-day Adventist is a high calling and a noble privilege. To be alive in these last days is a fantastic opportunity. We should never be ashamed of our church and the truths which God has entrusted to us. The very name "Seventh-day Adventist" is a strong, powerful witness.

Back in 1863 when our church was forming into a legally recognized entity, various titles were suggested to be the name of our church. One candidate was the "Church of God," but it was rejected, the thinking being that it lacked humility and was ostentatious. The leaders felt impressed that the name "Seventh-day Adventist" was appropriate and meaningful, identifying two of our main teachings, the second coming of Christ and the observance of the Sabbath of the Ten Commandments. This name was given the blessing of the Lord.

We should never be ashamed of that name! It is a privilege to bear that name! When you identify yourself as a Seventh-day Adventist, inquiry is aroused in curious minds as to the meaning of it. The Spirit prompts questions in the minds of truth-seekers to discover the significance of it. When I meet a new person and identify myself as a Seventh-day Adventist, I usually pause and then ask, "Have you ever heard of our church?" This many times gives opportunity to share briefly the main points of our faith. We must "show ourselves!" We must make ourselves known!

Have ready a supply of small books, tracts or brochures to give out as opportunity arises. Invite someone to come to church with you. Do not be discouraged if you are repulsed; share what you know in a courteous and kind way and let God through His Spirit speak to their minds. A heart warmed by the love of Jesus; words spoken with earnestness and simplicity will have an impact for good.

In this story, we see that when Jonathan stepped out in faith and acted, God worked with Him marvelously; the earth quaked in a mighty way. God blessed his simple plan with victory! We will see this principle repeated. If God's people today would step out and do something, God will work with them. Mighty signs will be done that will provide convincing evidence that the truth is from God. Hearts will be won; lives will be changed.

And just as in this story, the example of the modern day Jonathans will have a powerful influence on those who had previously remained on the sidelines. Many of those currently relaxing under the pomegranate trees will be roused to action when they see the enemy "melting away," and God's power at work. Many among those who had fled

the army will rejoin. Many of those who had mistakenly pitched their tents among the enemy will take again the standard of Jehovah and His law, and fight for Him. God is looking for a Jonathan to step up to the assignment and step out in faith. He is looking for those who will do something for Him. Will you work with Christ this week?