

The Cliffs of Courage

By Steven James

***“Nothing can hinder the LORD from saving, whether by many or by few”
(1 Samuel 14:6, NIV).***

(Read 1 Samuel 13:15-14:23)

How many swords were left in the whole country of Israel?

Who had them?

Why didn't Jonathan tell his father about his mission?

Picture a movie preview of this story.... You know, where that guy with the deep voice says something like: *“Their situation looked hopeless. ...”* (scene of thousands of Philistines on the cliffs surrounding 600 Israelites) *“Their weapons were gone....”* (close-up of the two swords) *“The enemy was closing in....”* (raiding parties sneaking toward the Israelite camp) *“Even the King was afraid....”* (Saul peering out of his tent) *“But two men refuse to give up....”* (zoom in on Jonathan and his buddy crossing the plain) *“Their courage is unstoppable....”* (at the base of cliff, getting ready to climb) *“... and so is their God....”* (terrified Philistines fleeing as the earth quakes beneath their feet) *“Action!”* (Jonathan ninja-kicking his way through a dozen Philistines) *“Adventure!”* (Jonathan and his armor-bearer scaling the cliff) *“And tons of carnage!”* (all out battle with swords flashing, blood spewing, limbs flying) *“The Cliffs of Courage! The Bible as you've never see it before.... coming soon to a theater near you!”*

Wow! Was taking on the entire Philistine outpost a foolish thing to do or a bold step of faith?

What assurance did Jonathan have that his mission would be successful?

What was the difference between Jonathan's confidence and the attitude of the Philistines? (1 Samuel 14:12)

The Philistines had surrounded the Israelites, intimidated them and gained tactical positioning. No one was stepping up to make anything happen. Israel was about to get defeated, but not because God wasn't *willing* to help them. He was. And not because God wasn't *able* to help them. He was. God was on their side! And Jonathan knew nothing could hinder God from victory.

Sometimes you need to step up and take action; sometimes it's just as important to stand by the person who does.

So then, what was the problem? They were about to get defeated because they weren't willing to take action.

The only thing that was holding them back from victory was their lack of faith. They were cowards. Then Jonathan decided to make something happen.

God was ready to send victory, but it took a step of faith to actually put feet to God's plan. Jonathan totally laid the outcome in God's hands, grabbed the only weapon he had, and set out to see what would happen.

Who caused the panic that shot through the Philistine camp?

Who was responsible for the victory, Jonathan or God? How do you know?

When did Saul and the other men join the battle?

By the way, don't overlook Jonathan's armor-bearer. He followed instructions, stood by his friend, fought by his side when the going got tough, and finished the job Jonathan started. Sometimes you need to step up and take action; sometimes it's just as important to stand by the person who does.

Which are you the most like: Jonathan, the armor-bearer, the Philistines or the Israelite army?

What kinds of battles are you involved in?

What weapons do you have at your disposal?

What's holding you back from stepping up and making something happen?

Sometimes evil is all around and there just doesn't seem to be any leadership, and you know you have in your hand one of the few swords around. It may be time to grab a buddy, do a little strategizing, ask God for courage and permission, and take off to start a battle. Go out on a limb and trust God for an earthquake.

Others will come out of hiding and join the battle.

Will you do it? Will you lay it all on the line and make something happen this week?