

GIFT OPENING

INTRODUCE

Well, good morning church! If I haven't met you yet, my name is Chris Martin, and I'm the Lead Pastor here.

If you've got your Bibles, and I hope you do, please open them up to 1 Samuel chapter 13. 1 Samuel 13. That's where we're going to be.

We want every person to have a hand on their Bible. You can open your phone or tablet to 1 Samuel 13. That's on page **234** in those Bibles under the chairs.

INTRODUCTION: UNDERDOGS

Americans love an underdog story. We do! It's probably because we see ourselves as a result of an underdog victory against Britain. But we love these things.

I asked some people their favorite underdog stories:

- Rudy.
 - Apparently, Samwise from Lord of the Rings...
 - played football once...
- The Karate Kid.
 - The original Cobra Kai! OK?
- The Rocky movies
 - all except Rocky 2, 3, 4, 5,
 - and the one where he is in his 60s...
 - that one's weird!

- Remember the Titans.
 - Good one!
- There was, of course, the Miracle US Hockey Team
 - in the 1980 Olympics.
- Somebody actually said to me: “you marrying Maryse.”
 - Which hurt...
 - even though I would wholeheartedly agree with it.
 - Still...

TRANSITION

And today in our text we are going to find two instances of God’s people being underdogs...

- of being in a position of weakness...
- but they will respond in two wildly different ways!

You see, in every position of weakness, we can respond in one of two ways. We can respond in **SLIDE FAITH OR FEAR.**

And man, so many of us choose to respond with fear.

ILLUSTRATION: PHOBIAS

Fear is actually the pandemic that won’t go away!

Did you know that there are over 300 clinical phobias out there? The American Psychiatric Association defines a phobia as *“something that causes us such stress that it interrupts normal life function.”*

So, I did some searching, and there are some absurd phobias out there.

- Ecclesiophobia - fear of church
 - That's bad news for us
- Chorophobia - fear of dancing
 - I've got that...
 - it's called awkward-at-weddings syndrome!
- Octophobia - fear of the number 8
 - I don't even know what that means...
 - Like, you only roll through stop signs?
- Politicophobia - Fear or abnormal dislike of politicians
 - Is it really a phobia if we ALL have it?
 - I think that's called...normal.
- Turophobia - fear of cheese
 - Gosh, I can't even imagine how sad this one is.
- And, of course, felinophobia - fear of cats
 - And that one has 4 other names:
 - ailurophobia,
 - elurophobia,
 - galeophobia,
 - & gatophobia – which is fear of cats in Mexico...

EXPLAIN: FEAR

Our culture is being ravaged by fear!

- The Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration
 - reports a 27% increase
 - in calls to their helpline since 2019.

- Anxiety disorders are up 26%
 - From COVID,
 - to civil unrest,
 - to political division,
 - to potential global wars...
 - they are all adding to stress, and anxiety, and fear.

And we can respond to our positions of weakness with FEAR!

- But as followers of Christ,
- we have the option to respond with FAITH.

And we're going to see two examples of this in our text today.

EXPLAIN: CONTEXT

So, like we do every week, in these historical narrative books...

let's talk about where we are in the story:

Israel is right in the midst of a change in how they are governed.

- For about 400 years
 - God's people, the Israelites,
 - have been led by judges.
- God functioned as Israel's king,
 - and raised up judges...
 - at certain times and places,
 - to deliver the people out of the hands of their enemies.

Samuel, the namesake of this book,

- was Israel's greatest prophet,
 - and last judge.

Because in 1 Samuel chapter 8, Israel demands a king.

They want a king, not a judge, to rule over them like all the nations.

- And in making this demand,
- they are rejecting God from being their king.

So, Samuel repeatedly warns them. But here are their exact words:

SLIDE 1 SAMUEL 8:19–20

[19] But the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel. And they said, “No! But there shall be a king over us, [20] that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles.”

BLANK SLIDE

TRANSITION

So, this is the end of the period of the judges, and now onto the period of the monarchy. Enter: Saul.

- Saul is the first king of Israel.

And over the last few chapters we’ve followed

- his identification,
- private anointing,
- public proclamation,
- and inauguration.

Last week Samuel officially steps down as Israel’s leader, and Saul is now the man. So, let’s get into our text. 1 Samuel chapter 13.

Only seven verses to cover today!

1 SAMUEL 13:1–2

[1] Saul lived for one year and then became king, and when he had reigned for two years over Israel, [2] Saul chose three thousand men of Israel. Two thousand were with Saul in Michmash and the hill country of Bethel, and a thousand were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin. The rest of the people he sent home, every man to his tent.

EXPLAIN: ARMY

So, this is the set up for today's text, and what we find out here is that one of Saul's first moves as king over Israel is to form a standing army.

- Prior to the monarchy,
- the Israelites looked to the judges...
 - and their citizen militia
- in times of crisis.

But Saul's establishment of a force of three thousand men provides Israel with a standing army.

- And back to 1 Samuel 8,
 - which we just looked at,
- this is part of what was expected from the king:
 - that he would fight Israel's battles.
- He needed an army to do that very thing.

EXPLAIN: JONATHAN

Now, we are introduced to another character here: Jonathan. And Jonathan is a very important character in the coming chapters.

- Jonathan is Saul's oldest son,
 - and thus,
- the heir to the kingship.

But, what's more, Jonathan is apparently military minded, because he is given charge over a portion of this new army.

TRANSITION

So, Saul forms an army of 3000 men.

- He keeps 2000 with him,
- and gives 1000 under the command of his son.

Now, on to verse 3, and the first instance to being the underdog.

1 SAMUEL 13:3a

[3] Jonathan defeated the garrison of the Philistines that was at Geba, and the Philistines heard of it.

EXPLAIN: GARRISON

Ok, as soon as Jonathan has his troops, he makes a decisive attack on the Philistine military power.

The text reads that he defeated the garrison of the Philistines.

- A garrison, by definition,
- is a permanent military installation,
- and thus, there were Philistine troops there.
 - How many troops?
- That would be pure conjecture.

But we are talking about a young prince,

- leading a relatively new force,
- and them defeating an established host...
- in a permanent installation.

This was an underdog situation...they were in the position of weakness.

- Yet, it proved to be very effective militarily.
- And this is also probably THE incident...
 - that initiated the long war
 - between Philistia and Israel
 - that will last throughout all of Saul's lifetime.

EXPLAIN: PHILISTINES

Now, we've talked about the Philistines in this series already, and I mentioned this:

- the Philistines are now the scourge of God's people
 - and we can look at the relationship
 - between Israel and the Philistines
 - as something of a barometer
 - for how God's people were doing
 - in their relationship with the Lord.

When Israel has the upper-hand over the Philistines,

- it's a sign that they were walking faithfully with the Lord.

But when Israel is defeated,

- the Bible portrays it as a sign of divine rebuke.

TRANSITION

Well, for today, Jonathan and his thousand are victorious.

- From their position of weakness...
- they respond with FAITH.

And that's true for us, too.

- In any moment where you find yourself
- in a position of weakness,
- you can respond with FAITH.

We'll get more into what that means in a bit,

- but that's how Jonathan responds.

Now, on to what happens next, let's pick it up in the rest of verse 3:

1 SAMUEL 13:3b-4

And Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, "Let the Hebrews hear." [4] And all Israel heard it said that Saul had defeated the garrison of the Philistines, and also that Israel had become a stench to the Philistines. And the people were called out to join Saul at Gilgal.

EXPLAIN: WHO?

Alright now...there's something right here we need to address.

- Who was it that defeated the garrison of the Philistines?
- Who was it who caused Israel to become a stench to the Philistines?

It was Jonathan, yo!

- And yet, who was it who got the credit throughout the land?

I mean, if you're reading in the ESV, what's the heading title in this section?

- *"Saul Fights the Philistines"*
- BUT SAUL DIDN'T DO ANY OF THE FIGHTING!

Here, we see the character flaws of Saul beginning to rear their ugly heads.

- First of all,
 - Saul taking credit...
 - for something he didn't accomplish...
 - IS A BIG problem he's going to have.
 - Jealousy will ravage him.

But even more so,

- I don't think it's reading into this moment too much...
- to ask this question:
 - Why didn't Saul take the initiative?
 - Why didn't the king go and fight for Israel?

Again, remember 1 Samuel 8...

SLIDE 1 SAMUEL 8:19b-20

And they said, "No! But there shall be a king over us, [20] that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles."

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TRANSITION

Does Jonathan's success point to some lack...some deficiency in Saul?

- I think it does...
- and this is big time foreshadowing
- to what we'll see later in this book.

So, Jonathan,

- even in light of being in a position of weakness,
- responds with FAITH in God,
- and dominates the Philistines.

But Saul takes the credit.

Now, what will the Philistines do in response? Verse 5.

1 SAMUEL 13:5

[5] And the Philistines mustered to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots and six thousand horsemen and troops like the sand on the seashore in multitude. They came up and encamped in Michmash, to the east of Beth-aven.

EXPLAIN: NUMBERS

Now, this verse is really important, but there are some questions in the interpretations about the numbers.

- So, depending on the translation you're reading
- you might see 30,000 chariots,

- or sometimes it's interpreted as *3,000 chariots*,
 - due to the fact that 30,000
 - seems like far too many
 - considering the terrain.

Really, I don't think the interpretation exactly matters.

- 30,000 or 3,000...
- the point here is that the Philistines
- pull out their big guns
- to deal with these pesky Israelites.

Like we already mentioned,

- Jonathan's domination of the Philistine garrison
- has proven very effective
- to stir up conflict with Israel's number one enemy.

APPLICATION

And I want to pause here for a point of application:

SLIDE

- **GOD WILL OFTEN PUT US...**
- **IN POSITIONS OF WEAKNESS...**
- **WHEN HE WANTS TO STRENGTHEN US.**

Now, God never delights in hurting us...

- but God wants us to trust him...
- and he wants us to depend on him.
- And that's one of the most important things we can ever learn.

Sometimes God will increase the size of the army against us,
so that we have no choice but to trust him.

You say, “*What do you mean by ‘increase the size of the army against us’?*”

- Well, maybe it was when your spouse failed you...
 - that you learned you could rely on your heavenly Father.
- Maybe it was the time when you got laid off...
 - that you learned that you could fully trust your heavenly provider.
- Maybe it was the time when you were all alone...
 - that you learned that it was God...
 - who is the friend who sticks closer than a brother.

What I’m saying is:

- God’s sovereign purpose behind hard things in your life,
- might be to teach you to lean into him like never before.

ILLUSTRATION: MY LIFE

My own faith journey has had so many of these.

- Early in my faith journey I wrestled immensely
 - with ongoing sin in my life...
 - I thought I would never find victory over.
- In college, my parents got divorced,
 - right after I felt called into ministry.
 - And I was like, “*God, why would you do this?*”
 - *I’m giving my life over to you!!*”

- Early in my marriage I found myself unemployed,
 - wondering how I would provide for my new bride.
- Another was when my mom was diagnosed with terminal cancer.
- One of the biggest burdens for my family
 - has been a long and ongoing health struggle for my wife.
- And I even had a spiritual burnout
 - that led me to almost leave ministry.

But it has been in the times when God weakened me...

- those times of loss
- or pain
- or discouragement
- or depression...

It's been in those times that God forced me...

- to lean into him
- and filled me with his power.

APPLICATION

Weakness forces you to lean into God.

- And you'll never know he's all you need...
- until you see he's all you have!

To be used by God

- means you come to a point
- where you realize how absolutely powerless you are,
- and you fall, in hope, on God's mercy.

So, sometimes God will put us

- in positions of weakness
- to get us to that point.

A.W. Tozer says it like this:

SLIDE *“It is doubtful whether God can bless a man greatly until he has first hurt him very deeply.”*

Mmm....that stings...but I’m pretty sure it’s true.

- Sometimes, in order to get you to lean into his power,
- HE HAS TO bring an army against you.

BLANK SLIDE

TRANSITION

So, listen... I want you to rethink what God might be doing in your life.

- Maybe you are experiencing an army against you right now...
- and I want you to be open to the essential lesson
- that God is showing you in it.

Church, this is my prayer for us:

- that God would either bless us or break us.
- Whatever it takes for us to fully depend on him.

Hudson Taylor puts it like this:

SLIDE *“[God] wants you to have something far better than riches and gold, and that is helpless dependence upon him.”*

So, how will Israel respond? Well, look at verses 6 & 7

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1 SAMUEL 13:6-7

[6] When the men of Israel saw that they were in trouble (for the people were hard pressed), the people hid themselves in caves and in holes and in rocks and in tombs and in cisterns, [7] and some Hebrews crossed the fords of the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. Saul was still at Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling.

EXPLAIN: FEAR

- If Jonathan's response,
 - to the position of weakness,
 - was with FAITH.
- Then Israel responds with the opposite.
 - They respond with FEAR.
 - Israel reverts towards cowardice.

And it's a shame, because the Israelites had just faced a major and scary obstacle, and the Lord had delivered them through it.

- But now they face a larger and scarier obstacle,
 - and instead of putting their FAITH in the Lord
 - to deliver them just as he already had...
- Instead of crying out to the Lord for help,
 - they hide in the caves.
- The Israelites choose FEAR.

APPLICATION: DOUBT

You see, a common misunderstanding

- is that the opposite of having faith
- is to have doubts.

But that's simply not the case!

- The scriptures present to us that the opposite of faith
 - is not doubt...

- **SLIDE THE OPPOSITE OF FAITH IS FEAR**

You see, if you've got doubts...I'll tell you...

- you'd make a great follower of Jesus.
- Cause even those who walked with him on earth doubted!

ILLUSTRATION: JESUS CALMING THE STORM

You see, in the gospels, there's a story of Jesus and his disciples in a boat.

- And they're out on the sea when a massive storm hits.
- And a number of Jesus' guys were occupational fishermen,
 - and when the guys who work on boats for a living
 - are freaked out...
 - man...get you to a life raft.
 - This is Titanic kind of stuff!

So, the disciples run to Jesus, but he was napping! During the storm!

- So, they wake Jesus up...
 - Which is never a good idea!
 - Let the messiah sleep!

- But Jesus gets up,
- and he tells the winds and the sea to be still...
- and they obey.
- The storm immediately calms.

And then, he doesn't turn to his disciples and say, "*why did you doubt?*"

NO, in Mark 4, here's Jesus' response:

SLIDE MARK 4:40

[40] He said to them, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?"

APPLICATION

You see?

POINT SLIDE THE OPPOSITE OF FAITH IS FEAR

- And what FEAR causes in people...is PARALYSIS.
- Fear will cause you to just kinda seize up and do nothing.

And man, that's so many of us.

Goodness, there are so many Christians

- who have not stepped out in faith...
 - in obedience to God's call in your life...
 - in whatever area you wanna pick...
- because you're afraid.

It's why a bunch of you don't give your first and best...

- you're not generous with your resources...
- because you're afraid of what's gonna happen.

It's why a bunch of you haven't ever served...

- because you're afraid of failing...
- or missing out on something else if you commit.

It's why a bunch of you are stuck in that job...

- and you're miserable...
- and you have a vision for something else...
- but you're afraid.

See THE OPPOSITE OF FAITH IS FEAR...and fear causes paralysis.

CONCLUSION **BLANK SLIDE W/PADS**

So, two responses

- to underdog moments...
- to positions of weaknesses...
- to hardships...
 - FAITH
 - or FEAR.

And Christian, the greatest danger you will ever face...

- is actually getting out
- of a posture of weakness.

The greatest danger in your life, is NEVER a Philistine army. NO!

- The DANGER is you losing a posture of weakness in your life.
- That's THE GREAT DANGER for the Christian.

- Not sickness...
- Not poverty...
- Not losing your job...
- Not even losing a spouse or child...

THE GREAT DANGER to the Christian

- is to get proud,
- and to lose the sense of dependence on God.

ILLUSTRATION: 2019

It's actually a pre-emptive that we all get to open those gifts and celebrate today.

- Because this week is the three-year anniversary
- of that burnout that I spoke about earlier...
- where I almost left ministry.

We started Fathom, and for the first 4 years, things had been growing.

- Things seemed to be going well.
- People were coming.
- Church was moving.
- We had some momentum...some hype!

But I begin to have this sense in my heart that I had to keep things going.

- I needed to have the answers.
- I needed to preach the best sermons.
- I needed to be Pastor Chris...the church planting golden boy!

But I was responding to my deep insecurities with FEAR...
and that FEAR manifested as pride.

But God, in his great kindness to me, raised an army against me.

- And he disciplined me.
- And he sat me down.
- And through the love and kindness of many people...
 - some of whom are in this room right now...
- The Lord taught me how kind and how gracious he really is.

And today, when those insecurities start showing up in my heart,

- as they are still prone to do,
- I am more equipped to respond with FAITH...
- because God,
 - in his kindness,
- weakened me.

ENDING

You see, more often than not, Christians will pass the tests of adversity.

But they will most often fail the test of prosperity.

- When you get strong...
- when you begin to think that you have all you need...
- that's when things begin to fall apart.

Never forget where you were when God found you.

Never forget the grace that he showed to you.

Never forget how much you owe to that grace.

- So, is God raising an army against you right now?
- Is God putting you in a position of weakness right now?
- Maybe he's trying to teach you something...

Whatever the situation, he says to you:

- *“I’ll be your security.*
- *I’ll be your ever-faithful companion.*
- *I’ll be your justification and your righteousness.*
 - *Your glory, the lifter of your head.*
- *I’ll be enough for you.”*

Don’t despise the positions of WEAKNESS...

God might just be STRENGTHENING you!

But choose to respond with FAITH...not FEAR.

Let’s pray.

RESPONSES:

Well, every week at Fathom we respond in 4 ways:

- COMMUNION – THE LORD’S SUPPER
- GIVING TITHES & OFFERINGS – fathomchurch.org/give
- PRAYER - fathomchurch.org/prayer
- SINGING

So, I’m going to read the Words of Institution from the Apostle Paul, we’ll take communion, and then we’ll sing:

1 CORINTHIANS 11:23–26 – WORDS OF INSTITUTION

[23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[25] In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

Love you church, let’s stand and sing together.

RESOURCES USED:

- Davis, Dale Ralph. Focus on the Bible: 1 Samuel.
- Tsumura, David Toshio. NICOT: The First Book of Samuel.