

## Weekly Reflection – Courage Under Blessing

### 2 Samuel 23:20-23

Because we're reading these stories thousands of years after the fact, and because we know how every story ends, we lose the element of surprise, the element of danger, the element of risk. That's how it is with this story in 2 Samuel 23:20. We know that Benaiah is the one who walks out of the pit. And if we aren't careful, we assume it had to have been like that. But this has to rank as one of the riskier and courageous things a man could do. We don't know where Benaiah was going or what Benaiah was doing when he crossed paths with this lion. All we know is he jumped into a pit with a lion on a snowy day. When we lack the guts to go after God-ordained, God-sized dreams, we rob God of the glory He deserves. It's possible to do nothing wrong and still do nothing right. In God's kingdom, breaking even is breaking bad. Just ask the servant who buried his talent in the ground (Matthew 25:14-30) Many people need to quit living as if the purpose of life is to arrive safely at death. Are you going to let fear dictate your decisions? Or are you going to live by faith and go after the lion? Let's go after a dream that is destined to fail without divine intervention. By definition, a God-sized dream will always be beyond your ability, beyond your logic, and beyond your resources. But that's how God gets the glory, He does things we can't take credit for. The question is, "Do you want God to get glory from your life? Do we want God to get glory from this local church?" If you do, if we do, then we must attempt things bigger than us, we must risk doing things that unless God shows up we will fail and look foolish. We have to get in the pit with a lion on a snowy day.

### Risk Is Woven into the Fabric of Our Finite Lives

I define risk very simply as an action that exposes someone to the possibility of loss or injury. But why is there such a thing as risk? The reason there is such a thing as risk is that there is such a thing as ignorance. If there were no ignorance, there would be no risk. Risk is possible because we don't know how things will turn out. (James 4:13-15) We are not God. We do not know about tomorrow. And therefore, risk is built right into the fabric of our finite lives. You can't avoid risk even if you want to. All of our plans for tomorrow's activities can be shattered by a thousand unknowns. Every direction you turn there are unknowns and things beyond your control. And the tragedy is that in the mirage of security (where we take risks for ourselves every day without knowing it!) we can be paralyzed to not take any risks for the cause of God, because we are mistaken and think it may jeopardize a security which in fact does not even exist.

### It is right to risk for the cause of God.

#### 1. 1 Samuel 13 and 14

- a. "Jonathan said to the young man who carried his armor, "Come, let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised. It may be that the Lord will work for us, for nothing can hinder the Lord from saving by many or by few." And his armor-bearer said to him, "Do all that is in your heart. Do as you wish. Behold, I am with you heart and soul.'" 1 Samuel 14:6-7 ESV
- b. "It may be" (or "perhaps")? If I were the armor bearer, I'd probably have said, "Uhh... I'm sorry, bro, I'm going to need more than your 'perhaps' if we are taking on an entire, fortified garrison of trained Philistine soldiers."
- c. Jonathan did not know how things would turn out, he took a great risk.
- d. But God was in it, and God gave to Jonathan and his armor bearer a great victory on that day (1 Samuel 14:11-15)

#### 2. Daniel 3

- a. *Daniel 3:16-18 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. (17) If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. (18) But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."*
- b. This is sheer risk. "We believe our God will deliver us. But even if he doesn't, we will not serve your gods."
- c. They did not know how it would turn out but they refused to bow to a false god and chose to be thrown into a fiery furnace.

3. 2 Samuel 10

- a. "Be of good courage, and let us be courageous for our people, and for the cities of our God, and may the Lord do what seems good to him." 2 Samuel 10:12 ESV
- b. Again, we learn from the words, "may the Lord do what seems good to him" that Joab and Abishai did not know how things were going to turn out, yet they were courageous and took a risk for the cause of God's people.

### **God Does Not Promise Short-Term Success**

There is no promise that every effort for the cause of God will succeed, at least not in the short run. John the Baptist risked confronting Herod who had divorced his wife to take his brother's wife, Herodias. (Matthew 14:1-12) And John got his head chopped off for it. Paul was beaten and thrown in jail in Jerusalem and shipped off to Rome and executed there two years later. Martyrs Mirror is a really thick book because not all risks for God have earthly short-term success. *"And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets—who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated—of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth."* Hebrews 11:32-38 ESV Taking a risk for God will always turn out great...even if I die. It's never eternally risky to obey God because it's in the obedience that the blessing of God is released.

### **Pure obedience to God will always feel like risk to our flesh. But pure obedience to God will never be eternal risk and will always bring His blessing.**

Is it possible that you are still living in a cage of fear, unwilling to take a risk for the glory of God? God wants to bless you; and your obedience, your faith, to Him positions you to receive that blessing. His blessing is not about you living the American dream. His blessing is not about your selfish pursuits. His blessing toward you is about God providing everything you need to accomplish His purpose for your life. I believe that as an individual and as a local church if we live in this mirage of so-called comfort and safety, unwilling to attempt things bigger than us, things beyond our capacity to accomplish, we will not experience the full blessing of God in our lives. I believe that not only does this cage of fear keep us from taking risks for the glory of God but this cage keeps God's full blessing out of our lives.

*"Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."'" Genesis 12:1-3 ESV*

- We are blessed to be a blessing. God often blesses us so we have the ability to bless others with the blessings that we have received from God. God doesn't bless us to raise our standard of living. He blesses us to raise our standard of giving and that's where we find joy.

*"The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, Thus you shall bless the people of Israel: you shall say to them, The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. "So shall they put my name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them."'" Numbers 6:22-27 ESV*

- Why would God tell Moses to tell the priests to bless the people? Why would God not just bless the people if He wanted them blessed?
- Six times we read the word "you" in this blessing. In the Hebrew language, there are two forms of this word "you", there's the plural and the singular. The word here is the singular form. It has your name on it, it has your fingerprint on it.
- The blessing of God is the difference between the best you can do and the best God can do. And that's a big difference.

1. Do you have a dream or dreams that you believe God has placed in your heart but fear has kept you from stepping out, taking a risk, and pursuing that dream?
2. Are there times in your life when you have allowed the fear of loss or injury to keep you from stepping out and taking a risk for the cause of God's glory?
3. How may God be asking you to take a risk for His kingdom?
4. Are there areas in your life where you have allowed the mirage of safety and comfort ability to keep you from going all in for the glory of God?