

## **JONATHAN'S BRAVERY**

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*Lesson: I Samuel 14:1-23*

*"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13).*

The lesson we read today was about one man who was very brave, and who started the saving of Israel from the Philistines. He was so very brave, because he dared to fight the Philistines when they were far, far more than the Israelites.

Just think what might have happened if Jonathan had just been an ordinary man, who said to himself: "I can't go against that guard-post. There's only me and my armor-bearer against 40 men. We're going to lose against this great army anyway. I'll stay in camp." If he had said this, then he would never have won that great battle, and the children of Israel may very well have remained the servants of the Philistines for a long time. But he was brave. He knew that a soldier had to fight, sometimes against difficult odds. He showed bravery.

You know children, this month we have Memorial Day on our calendars when we remember the thousands of men who fought and died in our country's wars. There were many people in those wars too, who felt they were fighting when they were very few against very many. But because they were brave men, and they knew it was their duty to fight, they took the chance, and often they won when it seemed that they could not have won, because the enemy was stronger than they were. I knew a man who fought in the First World War who was coming back from a fight, and looked back, and his friend lay wounded, right out where the enemy was shooting. It seemed very silly to go back and fetch him, when the bullets were almost certain to hit him and kill them both, because he was a very big man. But he went back, and picked his friend up, and carried him safely back. He was a very brave man. All over our country, people will remember soldiers, who were brave, and who did brave things, and many of them did get killed; but they did the work that a soldier should do.

When we read of brave men like Jonathan, and think that many other men over the years have been brave too, we might ask ourselves, "Would we be brave, if we had to? Would we be strong enough to fight if the enemy was bigger and stronger than we are? Or would we be cowards, who gave in, and ran and hid?"

You don't have to wait until you go to war to find out. There are many times in your lives, even today, when you have to be brave. After all, what did Jonathan do? He did the thing he knew was right. He did what was expected of him, for he was a prince and a leader in Israel. If you try to do the things that are expected of you, then you are going to have to be brave many times too. Let us say that you have done something that deserves a punishment, and you know you can get out of the punishment by lying. But you ought not to lie. It takes a brave child to stand up and admit that he did the wrong thing, and take his punishment. The child who is not brave runs and hides behind a lie. A brave man won't hide behind a lie. He's strong. He will tell the truth even if it hurts him. Are you brave enough to tell the truth, and take your punishment? You ought to be.

If a group of friends do things that are wrong, it takes a brave person not to do them. They might swear, or cheat at school, or even steal, and you know they'll make life hard for you at first if you refuse to do the same. But you know that your mothers and fathers and the Lord expect you to be brave and stand up for what is right. Can you? Or do you give in, and hide behind the crowd, and do what is wrong? A brave man wouldn't do that.

There are lots of times and lots of ways, that you can learn, even now, to grow up to be brave, as Jonathan was. We never hear, in all the stories of the Word, of anything that Jonathan did wrong. He was not only a brave fighter, he was an upright man too. For he learned that to be brave a man must be able to stand up for what is right, in small things and in big things. You can start becoming a brave man or woman, right now. *Amen.*