

The Hinge of God's Approval of Action
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14 ¹One day Jonathan son of Saul said to his young armor-bearer, "Come, let's go over to the Philistine outpost on the other side." But he did not tell his father.

²Saul was staying on the outskirts of Gibeah under a pomegranate tree in Migron. With him were about six hundred men, ³ among whom was Ahijah, who was wearing an ephod. He was a son of Ichabod's brother Ahitub son of Phinehas, the son of Eli, the Lord's priest in Shiloh. No one was aware that Jonathan had left.

⁴On each side of the pass that Jonathan intended to cross to reach the Philistine outpost was a cliff; one was called Bozez and the other Seneh. ⁵One cliff stood to the north toward Mikdash, the other to the south toward Geba.

⁶Jonathan said to his young armor-bearer, "Come, let's go over to the outpost of those uncircumcised men. Perhaps the Lord will act in our behalf. Nothing can hinder the Lord from saving, whether by many or by few."

⁷"Do all that you have in mind," his armor-bearer said. "Go ahead; I am with you heart and soul."

⁸Jonathan said, "Come on, then; we will cross over toward them and let them see us. ⁹If they say to us, 'Wait there until we come to you,' we will stay where we are and not go up to them. ¹⁰But if they say, 'Come up to us,' we will climb up, because that will be our sign that the Lord has given them into our hands."

¹¹So both of them showed themselves to the Philistine outpost. "Look!" said the Philistines. "The Hebrews are crawling out of the holes they were hiding in." ¹²The men of the outpost shouted to Jonathan and his armor-bearer, "Come up to us and we'll teach you a lesson." So Jonathan said to his armor-bearer, "Climb up after me; the Lord has given them into the hand of Israel."

¹³Jonathan climbed up, using his hands and feet, with his armor-bearer right behind him. The Philistines fell before Jonathan, and his armor-bearer followed and killed behind him. ¹⁴In that first attack Jonathan and his armor-bearer killed some twenty men in an area of about half an acre.

Israel Routs the Philistines

¹⁵Then panic struck the whole army—those in the camp and field, and those in the outposts and raiding parties—and the ground shook. It was a panic sent by God.^[a]

¹⁶Saul's lookouts at Gibeah in Benjamin saw the army melting away in all directions. ¹⁷Then Saul said to the men who were with him, "Mustering the forces and see who has left us." When they did, it was Jonathan and his armor-bearer who were not there.

¹⁸Saul said to Ahijah, "Bring the ark of God." (At that time it was with the Israelites.)^[b] ¹⁹While Saul was talking to the priest, the tumult in the Philistine camp increased more and more. So Saul said to the priest, "Withdraw your hand."

²⁰Then Saul and all his men assembled and went to the battle. They found the Philistines in total confusion, striking each other with their swords. ²¹Those Hebrews who had previously been with the Philistines and had gone up with them to their camp went over to the Israelites who were with Saul and Jonathan.²² When all the Israelites who had hidden in the hill country

of Ephraim heard that the Philistines were on the run, they joined the battle in hot pursuit. ²³ So on that day the Lord saved Israel, and the battle moved on beyond Beth Aven.

Part One

1. In this episode, we see that Jonathan and his armor bearer operated not on strength of numbers nor military strategy, but upon a symbol which determined their course of action.
2. They determined that the Lord would give them a sign of their success—if the Philistines they approached asked them to come closer. It seems that if they were told to stay where they were, the Lord was indicating that the Philistines would attack them.
3. Even more important is the crucial hinge in this situation: the will of God. They believed the response of the Philistines would show a future in which the Philistines would be defeated.
4. A similar scenario is in Genesis 24, when Abraham's servant asked the Lord to give him a sign of which woman he should seek as a wife for Isaac.

Part Two

1. The hinge or crucial connection between the uncertain situation and the successful resolution of the problem was the will of God: "Perhaps the Lord will act on our behalf."
2. This same situation is seen in James chapter, where businessmen are urged to make their future plans saying, "If the Lord wills," knowing that the successful fulfilment of their plans would depend on God's favor.
3. If God did not act in the situation of Abraham's servant, or the businessmen in James 4, or for Jonathan and the armor bearer, there would be disappointment or even disaster.
4. James also gives access to that hinge by telling believers to seek wisdom from God (James 1:5.)
5. The absence of the hinge is seen in the example of David numbering the troops. He followed a worldly course of action, planning and executing, but God was not with him in it.
6. When Moses came out of the tent of meeting, his glowing face demonstrated the favor of God.
7. The miracles of Jesus were done for a purpose: to demonstrate the hinge of God's favor with Him.
8. A master generalization about the hinge would be that the favor of God must be obtained before planning and action.

Part Three

1. For David and Jonathan, the hinge of the approval of God outranked everything else in the situation. The numbers of the troops, the strength of them, the number of weapons, the strategic advantages such as location—all of these could be considered *incidentals*.

2. Incidentals are facts that are visible and measurable, but they are not pivotal in any situation. They aren't causal and therefore they are not central.
3. While incidentals are visible, the hinge usually is not.
4. A generalization: Always elevate biblical symbolism (that indicates God's will) above the tangible, the incidentals. This is hard, because people want to put their trust in the tangible and are reluctant to trust the invisible.
5. Believers have a choice:
 - a. Bible-> unseen principles -> these edit, displace the visible
 - b. Or: the tangible -> human reasoning and planning ->displaces the hinge, the invisible
 - c. The choice determines how you will think and act in a situation.

Part Four

1. Idolatry places false symbols above biblical ones and provides visible or tangible false symbols
2. In Exodus 32:8-10, when Moses wasn't visible to them, the people demanded a visible symbol. "Make us gods!" they said. None of the great events of salvation from the Egyptians meant anything to them.
3. Thus idolatry is always fully compatible with the tangible.
4. In Deuteronomy 24 and Leviticus 26, the people would take the symbols of God's victory over the Promised land—wells they didn't dig, houses they didn't build—and they would come to assume they had provided all that for themselves.
5. Judaism became compatible with the tangible, the visible. By the time Jesus came, they were trying to settle doctrinal issues with strange scenarios like the woman who was widowed seven times.
6. The serpent in Genesis 3 wanted Adam and Eve to operate on their own assessment of the tangible, not on revealed will of God.
7. Idolatry is always a reduction, supplanting, or elimination of the hinge.
8. The theology of the tangible tries to displace the hinge. This is true in atheism as well as in evangelical "super preachers."

Part Five

1. In 1 Samuel 14:6, the young men agree that "Nothing can hinder the Lord from saving, whether by many or by few."
2. Generalizations are variations on the hinge: it rebases the rules of thought.
3. True faith always requires that the rules of thought be rebased.
4. The hinge involves the mind with rebased rules of thought that are more powerful than the tangible.
5. Faith moves God to action.
6. Romans chapters 1-8 shows what happens when tangibility takes over.
7. There is a pyramid of power:

Power of God
Rebased rules of thought
Tangibility

8. This eliminates fear and discouragement.
9. King Josiah, when he read the scrolls and realized what the Word of God was saying, understood that tangibility puts God at the bottom of the pyramid, which leads to faithlessness and the Word of God seeming to be meaningless and eventually forgotten.
10. Esther believed in this pyramid of power, but Haman didn't.

Part Six

1. In the case of Jonathan, his leadership was raw obedience: no planning meetings, no polling for consensus, no politics. He took a solitary personal course, with the help of his armor bearer.
2. The solution was thus very pure, simplistic.
3. Similarly, Abraham's dilemma in Genesis 22 was to exercise raw obedience.
4. Raw obedience is the answer to temptation, danger, personal trials. Trying to consider multiple outcomes leads to complexity and stress—raw obedience is simple.
5. The power of God has no natural explanations, no natural source.
6. Chaos of choice can hinder obedience.
7. We must make a commitment to raw obedience. What we see in the hinge is the insistence that tangibles be treated as incidental only.
8. We do it wholeheartedly: as the armor bearer said, "I am with you, heart and soul."