

## What's the Message – Lesson 52

Today we continue our study of the lessons from the Kingdom of Israel, with the selection of David to be its second king.

Greetings in the name of Jesus, our Savior. We pray that you may see in the attitude and behavior of David an example for us all to follow, an example of trusting in God in spite of the apparent odds against you when life is at its toughest. Amen.

Last time we looked into the selection of Saul to be the first king of Israel, and learned a lesson that God had been trying to teach his children from the very beginning – a lesson that they never were able to truly master. The lesson was that God expected full and complete obedience from those He had chosen to be His people, and would not be content with partial or casual obedience.

This was the flaw in Saul's otherwise impressive character, but it was a fatal flaw and would not be tolerated by God. Now, since God is all-knowing, the reasonable question to ask is, "why did God choose Saul in the first place?" We may never fully know the answer while we live on this side of Heaven, but perhaps it was to be a living illustration of the obedience God wanted from His people, and a clear example of how failure would be dealt with.

However, as we read in 1 Samuel chapter 15, verse 35, that after the event with the Amalekites, for the rest of his life, Samuel never saw Saul again, *but Samuel grieved over Saul.* And chapter 16 begins with these words: *The Lord said to Samuel, "How long will you grieve over Saul, seeing I have rejected him from being king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and go; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons."*

And Samuel did as he was instructed, but his purpose was hidden from the people out of fear that Saul would kill Samuel, and perhaps others. So Jesse brought his sons before Samuel, beginning with the eldest. One by one the sons of Jesse came before Samuel, and each one God rejected.

God told Samuel not to look upon external appearance, *for the Lord sees not as man sees, man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.* Seven sons of Jesse were presented to Samuel, but the Lord rejected them all. When Samuel asked if there were any other sons, he learned that the youngest was tending the sheep.

*And Samuel said to Jesse, send and fetch him; for we will not sit down until he comes here.* When David – or as the Hebrews pronounce the name, Da-veed – had been brought in, the Lord told Samuel that this was the one to be anointed. *Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward.*

The next event that we will touch upon is one of the best-known stories about David. It is found in the book of First Samuel, chapter 17. The story begins when Jesse sent David to the camp of Saul at Sucoh, to check on his three eldest brothers, who were joined with the army of Saul in a battle against the Philistines. And there was a giant of a man, a man named Goliath, who roared out a challenge to the Israelites,

*Choose a man for yourselves, and let him come down to me. If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will be your servants; but if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall be our servants and serve us. I defy the ranks of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together.*

But all the men of Israel were afraid of this mighty warrior, and none would take the challenge. Then David said to some of the men of Israel, *Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?* When Saul heard about David's words, he sent for David. And David told Saul, *The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.*

David rejected the heavy armor of Saul, but took his sling and some smooth stones from the brook, and drew near to Goliath. *And when the Philistine looked, and saw David, he disdained him; for he was but a youth . . . and the Philistine cursed David by his gods. Then David said to the Philistine, You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin; but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand . . . that all this assembly may know that the Lord saves not with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's and he will give you into our hand.*

The outcome of the story is well known. David ran toward Goliath, and with one accurate throw with his sling, buried a stone in the forehead of Goliath, knocking him to the ground. And when the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled in panic. The men of Israel pursued them, and then plundered their camp.

And that, Teacher, is a summary of the highlights of chapters 16 and 17 of First Samuel. All of the stories of David are fascinating, and many books and even movies have been made about his life. But what is the lesson for us? What's the message we should take from these chapters?

It is a lesson of contrasts. Where had Saul placed his trust? In himself. We have seen clearly that Saul was not satisfied with the word of God through Samuel. He felt that he needed to act, to add to the instructions he had been given. In whom did Goliath trust? In his own power and strength. He thought he was more powerful than any other mortal man, and could defeat anyone that Israel could put forth to fight him. Now what is the contrast? In whom did David trust? Himself, or the Lord? His words to Goliath are plain and straightforward: *I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts . . . whom you have defied.* David understood that he was not alone, that he was fighting as the representative of God, and that nothing could withstand the power of God.

We may not be facing a battle with swords and slings, but there are other kinds of “giants” that challenge you. It could be the acts of a son or daughter, the death of a spouse, the loss of a job, a financial crisis, the impacts of drugs or alcohol, or any of a host of other possibilities – but when we do face a challenge in our life, do we understand that we are not alone, that God is there to shield us and strengthen us to deal with the situation?

What we can learn from David is that God is there with us in the most difficult of times. All we have to do is to put our trust in Him, even when the odds seem overwhelmingly against us, for nothing and no one is able to withstand against our Lord.

Next time we shall see examples of the jealousy of Saul.