

STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF DAVID

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by

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I Samuel 16:18-17:30 Lesson #4 April 29, 1979

Today we will see how the Lord, in his sovereignty, has the man who is to be replaced bring his replacement into the palace. You will recall that Samuel anointed David King of Israel, at which time the Spirit came mightily upon David and departed from Saul. God, then, sent a spirit of evil, which even Saul's courtiers recognized was from the hand of the Lord, to bring Saul to repentance. To combat the depressions brought on by this spirit, Saul's servants requested permission to seek a man who was a skillful player on the harp. It was very common to do that in those days. It was even common in the Greek world. So, in I Samuel Chapter 16, Verse 17, we see Saul requesting his servants to provide such a man.

We pick up now in I Samuel 16, Verse 18:

Then one of the young men answered and said, "Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite who is a skillful musician, a mighty man of valor, a warrior, one prudent in speech, and a handsome man; and the LORD is with him. So Saul sent messengers to Jesse, and said, "Send me your son David who is with the flock." And Jesse took a donkey loaded with bread and a jug of wine and a young goat, and sent them to Saul by David his son. Then David came to Saul and attended him, and Saul loved him greatly; and he became his armor bearer. [This is another word for "aide-de-camp" They might have up to 10 armor bearers, as Joab, David's general, did] And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, "Let David now stand before me; for he has found favor in my sight." So it came about whenever the evil spirit from God came to Saul, David would take the harp and play it with his hand; and Saul would be refreshed and be well, and the evil spirit would depart from him.

It is worthy of note that, as part of David's training to be a shepherd of Israel, God has made him a shepherd of sheep. Looking at some of the results of that wilderness training, we see that David is a "skillful musician." Not only would music benefit David, but it would also quiet his sheep. Animals are calmed by the voice of a man singing, especially if it is the voice of someone they know. David would look at the stars, think of the God behind those stars and make up beautiful songs which he set to music. So, out of his loneliness and his desire to quiet his sheep came up to probably 73 Psalms, [at least he is named in 73 of the Psalms]. This affected not only his sheep and himself, but down through the ages when people are troubled most of them turn to the Psalms. When I do hospital visits, I generally read in Romans and in Ephesians, to give patients assurance about what they possess in Christ. Then I read the Psalms to calm and quiet them and to get their eyes off their circumstances [the nurses, the doctors, the tubes, the I.V.s] and onto their God. David was deeply troubled many times and expressed his thoughts and feelings in words with which God gifted him, so the patients I visit can relate to those words even though they come to them across 3,000 years. The Comforter given to David is the same Comforter that reaches into their hearts.

We also see that David was "a mighty man of valor." Out in the wilderness with his sheep, he was also faced with marauding bears and lions. Since he was alone and without help, he bore the sole responsibility for protecting those sheep. God was preparing him with a courageous heart.

He was also "a warrior." The Philistines came and went as they chose. Even though Scripture calls them "uncircumcised", they were a highly intelligent and highly civilized people. They came from Greece, the Aegean area, and had a very complex, although a very vicious, culture. They were a wicked warrior people who knew how to fight. They invaded Egypt where they remained until they were driven out. They then went into Judah, the Southern part of Palestine, where they remained. They also had control of iron smelting and did not allow any blacksmiths in Judah. So the Israelites had to go to the Philistines to have their iron plows and pruning spears sharpened and repaired. The Israelites were essentially left with wooden weapons, spears, javelins, bow and arrows and, of course, the sling shot. As a result, they became experts with the sling shot. The Book of Judges [Chap 20, Verse 16] speaks of 700 men from Benjamin who could "split a hair" with a sling shot. So, alone in the wilderness, David became an accomplished warrior using only a sling shot or a wooden javelin to protect his sheep from warriors armed with iron weapons.

We also read he was "one prudent in speech." If you are the smallest boy in a huge family, you would probably either become prudent in speech or become the most bruised boy around. He was number eight son, even possibly, as Psalm 51 hints, an illegitimate son of Jesse's marriage in his old age. In Judah in those days, in the Jewish culture, that was a real stigma. The Lord faced exactly the same stigma 900 years later when he was considered the bastard of Nazareth.

He was also "a handsome man."

But, finally, the most important thing about him, according to this Scripture, is that "the Lord is with him." His life was such that one of Saul's servants, in the court way up in Gibeah, recognized that the preincarnate Jesus Christ, the Lord God Almighty, Yahweh of the Old Testament, was with David. There was something that made this apparent. When the king suffered from a spirit of evil from Yahweh, then, who else but someone who had Yahweh with him could be of help? So, Saul himself brings David into the palace, and loves him greatly because when David plays and sings, the spirit of evil from the Lord is indeed driven off and Saul is calmed. The only problem is that Saul's love for David is fleshly and selfish. He loves David essentially for what David can do for him. Down the road he discovers what David can do to him and his love turns to hate. For fear of losing his kingdom, he then begins a planned and premeditated campaign to eliminate David. That is the tragedy of fleshly love. It lasts only as long as it benefits the one being loved.

Ponder a moment on why a spirit of evil sent to Saul to discipline him would depart when David sang a Psalm. The Psalms of David were created by the inspiration of God, literally the "outbreathing" of God and are just as inspired by the Spirit of God as the prophesies. So when David was singing to Saul he was singing inspired Scripture. Do you see the graciousness of God here? In a compassionate attempt to reach Saul, he takes the very Scripture of the Bible, the Word of God, and has it sung to Saul. [A Psalm is just a sacred song put to music.] God really wants him to repent. We have, along with this beautiful picture of the grace of God, also a picture of the sovereignty of God. God has had Saul bring into the palace the very man God has ordained to replace him on the throne.

Chapter 17 now brings us to the confrontation with Goliath. In Chapter 14, thanks to Jonathan's bravery, the Israelites under Saul defeated the Philistines, but because of Saul's rash oath that kept the Israelites from eating all day, they did not destroy nearly as many as they should have. Now the Philistines are back again.

All through Scripture the Philistines are a picture of those things that hinder, enslave or place in bondage the people of God. Goliath of Gath, as the champion of the Philistines, pictures a particularly besetting sin, one that is entrenched. In the episode of David and Goliath, we see not only an historical event, but also a beautiful spiritual application of how a Christian can deal with the areas of life that are Philistine, invaders, alien and particularly with the Goliaths that are so entrenched in a life.

So let us look at Chapter 17, beginning with verse 1:

Now the Philistines gathered their armies for battle; and they were gathered at Socoh which belongs to Judah [they were trespassers. They did not belong there], and they camped between Socoh and Azekah, in Ephes-dammim [just 17 miles south of Jerusalem]. And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered, and camped in the valley of Elah, and drew up in battle

array to encounter the Philistines. And the Philistines stood on the mountain on one side while Israel stood on the mountain on the other side, with the valley between them.

The valley was a dry wash with very high cliffs and a brook in the middle. It was a typical dry wash, or wadi, filled with a rushing torrent during the winter rains but dry the rest of the time, and it ran northwesterly into the Philistine strongholds of Ekron and Gath. The Philistines, having just been beaten rather badly by the Israelites, are not about to go down the hill and then have to fight the Israelites on an uphill slope. It is also possible that, in their rout of the Philistines, the Israelites picked up a lot of iron weapons. On the other hand, the Israelites have no desire to go down into the valley and fight uphill against the Philistines who are fully equipped with iron weapons. So they do what is quite common in ancient warfare, they decide on representative conflict. Instead of the two armies fighting, each army chooses a champion to fight. The outcome of their battle determines which army wins the victory, and which one takes over the territory in question.

The Philistines had what they thought was an ace in the hole, "Goliath of Gath." Goliath was an Anakim. He was of the sons of Anak, the giants. In those days there was a whole civilization of giants that went right up the Jordan Valley. [Hundreds of skeletons of giant people have been found up the Jordanian Valley.] They were called Rephaim, Zamzummim, Emim, Anakim, Nephilim. You find them both before the flood of Noah and after the flood of Noah. They were at least "six cubits and a span." [Using the 18" cubit, that is 9-1/2 ft tall; using a 21" cubit that is 10-1/2 ft tall.] It is called a megalithic civilization, mega = big, lithic = stone. They built huge stone buildings. There really was a race of giants. They really did inhabit the Jordanian Valley around the hill country of Hebron. They were driven out of the area by the Mesopotamian Chedorlaomer and his coalition in the days of Abraham. They were driven out again by the Jews under Joshua, but they were never driven out of the country. They ended up in the southwest part of Palestine where they joined forces with the Philistines. So, we have Goliath of Gath who is no Sunday School tale made up by a Sunday School teacher. He is historically accurate and comes from a whole civilization of giants.

So from the Philistines point of view, picking champions this is really the way to go, "Wait until you see our champion."

Chapter 17, Verse 4:

Then a champion came out from the armies of the Philistines named Goliath, from Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span [either 9-1/2 or 10-1/2 feet tall. Men, at that time, were about 5-1/2 feet tall, so David is looking at someone about twice as big as he is]. And he had a bronze helmet on his head, and he was clothed with scale-armor [overlapping scales] which weighed five thousand shekels of bronze [that is about 160 lbs. His armor weighed more than David did soaking wet]. He also had bronze greaves [or shin guards] on his legs and a bronze javelin slung between his shoulders.

He came out morning and evening when the sun was at the right angle, a solid hunk of shining metal 10-1/2 feet tall walking like a robot down that hill, and there stood the Jews on the other hill with their slings and their wooden weapons. [Some had swords, but many did not.]

Chapter 17, Verse 7:

And the shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and the head of his spear weighed six hundred shekels of iron [That was 20 lbs. Just the spear head weighed 20 lbs. This fellow threw a spear that had a 20 lb. shot in the front of it shaped like a point, and he threw it easily]; his shield-carrier also walked before him. [He had to have someone lug his shield for him] And he stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, and said to them, "Why do you come out to draw up in battle array? Am I not the Philistine [hear his arrogance] and you servants of Saul? Choose a man for yourselves and let him come down to me [into the valley where he is]. If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will become your servants; but if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall become our servants and serve us." Again the Philistine said, "I defy the ranks of Israel this day; give me a man that we may fight together."

When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid.

Goliath came out each morning and each evening when the sun was at the right angle and stood there flexing his armor and flashing it around, giving this taunt and humiliating the people of God, because their trust was in size, and their "size" was a coward.

Here is a typical contest between the flesh and the Spirit. On one side you have all the might of the flesh, Goliath of Gath. He stood head and shoulders above the Philistines, and he demanded a mighty champion like himself as an opponent. On the other side there was Saul. The Israelites chose him as king because of his physical stature. He stood head and shoulders above all of them. But what made him a mighty warrior, the Spirit of God, had now departed from him. What he had at Michmash was gone, and without the Spirit, he was a spineless coward. When the Spirit of God came mightily upon him, he took over the armies in Israel, defeated the Philistines, and rescued Jabesh-gilead. But, when the Spirit of God was withdrawn, we see him as he really was, a coward and also a murderer, ready to kill anyone who might try to usurp his throne. Since, as the leader goes so goes the nation, the fear of Saul infected the whole nation. When he ran, they ran. Their courage was all based upon what looked great rather than upon what was great. They did not realize that the courage of Saul was not based upon his stature but upon the Spirit of God.

Now we come to David and his errand here. He has already been anointed king. He is God's ruler and he knows it. Saul is a usurper, and he knows that. Look at how God trains his anointed king who is already filled with the Spirit of God.

Chapter 17, Verse 12:

Now David was the son of the Ephrathite of Bethlehem in Judah, whose name was Jesse, and he had eight sons. And Jesse was old in the days of Saul, advanced in years among men [Jesse is a very old man. David has no model for a father with whom he can identify]. And the three older sons of Jesse had gone after Saul to the battle. And the names of his three sons who went to the battle were Eliab the first-born, and the second to him Abinadab, and the third Shammah. And David was the youngest. Now the three oldest followed Saul, but David went back and forth from Saul to tend his father's flock at Bethlehem [Whenever a mood came upon Saul, he would snap his fingers and up would come David to play his harp. When Saul was through with him, back he would go to the flock. Again he was the lowest man on the totem pole]. And the Philistine came forward morning and evening for forty days, and took his stand

David is nothing more than a messenger boy for Saul. He comes at the beck and call of the king he is to replace. Look at what else he is made to do.

Chapter 17, Verse 17:

Then Jesse said to David his son, "Take now for your brothers an ephah [35 quarts] of this roasted grain and these ten loaves, and run to the camp to your brothers [These are the brothers who do not accept him, who pick on him, who treat him like the runt of the litter]. Bring also these ten cuts of cheese to the commander of their thousand, and look into the welfare of your brothers, and bring back news of them. For Saul and they and all the men of Israel are in the valley of Elah, fighting with the Philistines.

David is not only a messenger boy for Saul but for Jesse also. You would think that God, having anointed David as king and having filled him mightily with the Spirit of God, would put him right in the palace. Instead here he is running errands, jumping for Jesse, jumping for Saul. What is God doing?

We talked about authority last time. God's authority is that of Lord and God. Nobody else is Lord. All other men are brothers. As we used to say in Navy boot camp, "You are not fit to command until you learn to obey." What caused Saul to be disqualified? Disobedience. He never really obeyed God. So, God is not going to put

David on the throne until he has learned absolute obedience. David is not fit to command the nation of Israel until he is in absolute obedience to the God of Israel, Israel's only Ruler, Yahweh, The Preincarnate Jesus Christ. So God runs David up and down in the back woods, while all the time he is God's anointed king of Israel. Any authority David has will come from obedience.

On a personal level, where does any authority we might have come from? Same place. Obedience, the Lordship of Christ. We have no right, no right whatsoever, to talk to anyone about their soul, or about their walk with the Lord, unless our life is in obedience to Jesus Christ, insofar as we are personally able to make the right choices. We have no authority otherwise. If, however, we are obedient to Christ, as far as our will is concerned, stumbling though we may be but with a real desire to be obedient, then we have tremendous authority. We have all the authority of Jesus Christ, and people will see it and sense it.

A pagan Centurion sensed it in Jesus Christ. Jesus was coming into Capernaum, a major seaport and headquarters of his Galilean ministry, when a Centurion, who was the equivalent of anywhere from a Captain in our army to a Colonel, depending upon the importance of his command, approached him. This Centurion was a big man in the city. He had built a whole synagogue for the Jews with his own money. He had a slave he greatly loved who was sick, and he wanted Jesus to heal him. Why would he come to Jesus? He was one of the conquerors of the Jews, not in subjugation to them. What was there about Jesus that impressed this Centurion? It was his authority, and this Centurion knew about authority.

He said in Matthew 8:8b;

"...just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I, too, am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes, and to another, 'Come!' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this!' and he does it."

He knew about authority. He knew authority could just say the word and things happened. Where did the Centurion get his authority? He got it from absolute obedience to his Tribune. When he was in absolute obedience to his Tribune, he could command men to be put to death for disobedience, and they had a very slow, painful way of killing disobedient soldiers in those days. It was quite effective and quite fatal. It is said that a Roman soldier was more afraid of his commander than he was of the enemy. Here he saw Christ in absolute obedience to a higher authority, in this case His Father, so he knew he had absolute authority over others.

If Christ's authority lies in absolute obedience to the Father and the Christian's authority lies in absolute obedience to the Lordship of Christ, husbands, you whose wives are to submit to you in everything as unto the Lord, from where does your authority come? Your obedience to your Lord, of course. Your wife has no confidence or peace in submitting to you in everything as unto the Lord unless you are obedient to your Lord. She may give you grudging obedience because you are her husband, or she may give you willing obedience because of the Lordship of Christ in her life, but you, yourself, have no authority apart from your own obedience.

Parents, from where does your authority over your children come, the lash, the whip, or the most dreaded of all punishments, turning off the TV? No, they learn to obey or disobey from watching you obey or disobey. During the 60s there was a struggle with the kids at Stanford over smoking pot, trying speed, and dropping acid, among other things. And why not? Every night they would watch daddy come home from the office and load up on three double martinis before dinner. Our authority as parents comes from modeling our obedience to Jesus Christ.

So, God is putting his king through boot camp. David is not fit to command the nation of Israel until he has learned to obey absolutely Yahweh, the Lord of Israel, with no questions asked.

Christ's absolute obedience contributed to his being called "meek." Meek, however, is a very poor word in English. The actual literal meaning of the word is "strength under control." The word "gentle" is a good word for it. Scripture calls Moses the "meekest man on the face of the earth," but he had strength under control. He was anything but a push over. He led 2.5 million people through a howling wilderness. He was a gentle

person, but he had authority. Why? Obedience. When Miriam and Aaron, his sister and brother, said, "Who is Moses anyway? We are all of the same family. How come he is such a hero?" God says, "Moses, Miriam, Aaron, come out here in front of the tent of meeting. I want to talk to you." Then, he looks right at Miriam and Aaron and says, "How dare you talk to Moses like that. To the prophets, I appear in visions and in dreams, but to him I talk face-to-face. He is the meekest man on the face of the earth. How dare you talk to him like that. [Numbers 12:1-8]" Immediately Miriam became a leper, and Aaron had to plead with Moses to intercede for her. God said, "O.K., I will do one thing for you. If her father had but spit in her face, would she not bear her shame for seven days? Let her be shut up for seven days outside the camp, and afterward she may be received again. [Numbers 12:14]" Seven days she stayed outside the camp, unclean, a leper. "Don't you ever talk to Moses like that again." Meekest man on the face of the earth. A lily?. Oh, no! That is power under control, and it came from obedience.

This is what we have in David. God is going to make him a powerful man, and he does it by making him absolutely obedient.

I Samuel 17, Verse 20:

So David arose early in the morning and left the flock with a keeper and took the supplies and went as Jesse had commanded him. And he came to the circle of the camp while the army was going out in battle array shouting the war cry. And Israel and the Philistines drew up in battle array, army against army. Then David left his baggage in the care of the baggage keeper, and ran to the battle line and entered in order to greet his brothers. As he was talking with them, behold, the champion, the Philistine from Gath named Goliath, was coming up from the army of the Philistines, and he spoke these same words; and David heard them. When all the men of Israel saw the man, they fled from him and were greatly afraid. And the men of Israel said, "Have you seen this man who is coming up? Surely he is coming up to defy Israel. And it will be that the king will enrich the man who kills him with great riches and will give him his daughter and make his father's house free in Israel." Then David spoke to the men who were standing by him, saying, "What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine, and takes away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should taunt the armies of the living God?" And the people answered him in accord with this word, saying, "Thus it will be done for the man who kills him."

When Goliath comes out and challenges the Israelites, they all flee. Why? Where is their mighty leader, the man called by God to head the nation of Israel and be its leader? Instead of dealing with this Philistine champion in the strength of the Lord, Saul is cowering somewhere devising an alluring material reward for anyone who will kill Goliath. He is offering "great riches and will give him his daughter [son-in-law-to the king] and make his household free in Israel [no taxes, no draft, no tithes]." The magnificent leader that the Israelites picked because of his great stature and kingly appearance is buying off someone to go do his job for him. This is why Israel is weak. Their king is weak.

Why do you suppose David asks this strange question? It sounds pretty selfish.

"Then David spoke to the men who were standing by him, saying, 'What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine, [now watch these words] and takes away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should taunt the armies of the living God?'"

Not the armies of Israel, you will note. If you do not read carefully, it would appear David is hoping to make a deal. He has no money. He is poverty-stricken, low man on the totem pole. Here is a chance to get rich, not to mention a little prestige. But look closely to where he is focusing their attention. He focuses from Goliath, to the living God. "Who will kill this Philistine and take away the reproach from Israel?"

Two things David focuses on. The first: "For who is this uncircumcised Philistine..." Why does he use the word uncircumcised? You will remember that God made a covenant with the nation of Israel in the time of Abraham. Part of that covenant was that God would 1) bless the nations of the earth through the descendants

of Abraham, and 2) that they would possess forever the land from the River of Egypt to the Euphrates and from the Mediterranean to the great desert. As a mark of his covenant, he required circumcision, and David is saying, "This man is uncircumcised. He is not part of the covenant and has no right to the land." God chose circumcision as a symbol of the removal of the flesh. But while the Israelites, including their king, may have been physically circumcised, at the moment they were looking at their circumstances from a purely fleshly standpoint. They were denying their circumcision. Israel was in such a state at this time that one of their prophets indicated the name of God was blasphemed among the Gentiles because of them.

The second thing David focuses on "...that he should taunt the armies of the living God?" Goliath is taunting the God of Israel, the armies "of the living God." He is not taunting the armies of Israel. David is trying to transfer the people's sight from the circumstances to the Person involved in those circumstances. The tragedy of the flesh is that it gives up access to God. Saul had given up the right to inquire of God. When he could do it, he would not. Now when he would do it, he cannot. Scripture warns about this; God will give you over to what you choose [Romans 1]. So, do not take advantage of God. Saul had access to God up until the time the Spirit departed from him, but he did not use it. He did his own thing. Remember the battle at Michmash [Chapter 14]. He started to inquire of God. He even got the priest up there, but as soon as he heard the yelling of the Jews and figured the battle was going their way, he said to the priest, "Withdraw your hand," and away he went. He shoved God right into the background and took off in the flesh. He made that hasty vow and lost the real victory. Now when he needs access the most, it is gone.

But then what happens when you start acting in faith, Chapter 17, Verse 28:

Now Eliab his oldest brother heard when he spoke to the men; and Eliab's anger burned against David and he said, "Why have you come down? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your insolence and the wickedness of your heart; for you have come down in order to see the battle." But David said, "What have I done now? Was it not just a question?" Then he turned away from him to another and said the same thing; and the people answered the same thing as before.

The moment you act in faith you can expect opposition, oftentimes from your own family. At his first coming, Christ said in Matthew 10:34;

Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth: I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's enemies will be the members of his household.

Jesus said, "I am going to cut right down the center of families, and some of your greatest opposition may come from the ones closest to you." It is not any different in the Old Testament as witness Eliab's response when David steps out in faith.

Next time we will pick up in Chapter 17, Verse 31 and we will see David fight Goliath. As you read through these next verses, watch the three attitudes; the attitude of David, a spiritual man in Christ; the attitude of Saul, a carnal man in Christ, and the attitude of Goliath, an unbeliever. Then notice the effect of the attitude of the spiritual man upon the other two. There is a wonderful little picture here.

Prayer:

Father, we just thank you for your Word and for the way it takes things of history and shows us how they apply to our lives today. We thank you that we truly are your covenant children and that we are born of you, that we have the right to reign as kings and not to be slaves, and yet that right, Father, is based upon full obedience to you because there is only one Lord. We are brothers, and so our authority only rests in our obedience to you. You are the only one who has true absolute authority. Help us, Father, to realize that as we serve one another in obedience to you, we are exercising your authority in the way you exercise it by going to the cross for us. Thank you, Father, for the beautiful opportunity of giving ourselves for others,

in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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