

Let's open our Bibles tonight for our study in 1 Samuel 17 as we continue through these historic books of the Old Testament.

Last week, if you were with us, we came in our studies in 1 Samuel to David, if you will, God's choice to be the king over Israel - replacing Saul who had forfeited his position through disobedience and through rebellion and just not responding to what God had called him to do. It would be seven-and-a-half years from the time that the LORD set him aside till the time that Saul died, till the time that David would even be able to ascend to the throne; and even then, many of the tribes would take seven more years to get in line. So you can imagine all that David was going through.

So, Saul had been set aside. And the old prophet, Samuel, was given the responsibility not only to go anoint a new king but to tell Saul that the LORD was done with him. And, to be honest with you, it broke Samuel's heart; it seemed to bother Samuel, who was an old timer in his 80's now, far more than it did Saul. So the LORD introduced David into Saul's life after being anointed in private, if you will, at David's home. Then nothing seemed to change, but because the LORD had removed His Spirit from Saul, He also sent a troubling spirit to plague him. And a search was made, and Saul asked if anyone knew anybody that could play good music to soothe his troubled and agitated spirit, and they came up with David - a godly man. He had, already, a good reputation even though he was probably still a teenager at this time. And he was brought periodically to play before Saul. And, as a result of the worship, that spirit departed from Saul for a time. We mentioned a couple times it's good to get here early for worship because, man, it can bless, can't it? And really not just prepare our hearts but just take from us those troubles and cares that so often the enemy wants to place on us. So David would come and play, but he would still be a shepherd to his father's sheep.

But the LORD gives us a lot to learn. David's one of those characters that God goes out of His way, I guess, to give us a lot of information - forty chapters (from 1 Samuel 13 all the way through the end of his life in 1 Kings 2). So there's lots to learn. Most of the focus early on and the rest of this book is ascension to the throne - those seven-and-a-half years of trouble that Saul gave to him. The first

ten chapters of 2 Samuel talk a lot about his triumphs, the glory that God brought upon his life. The next ten chapters or so - all the troubles that he ran into, making some bad choices. And then we ultimately get to his death.

We mentioned last week that it had been 400 years or so since Joshua had died. And during those 400 years (and if you've been with us, we've covered them pretty, I think, in-depth wise), the people of God had mostly waned in their relationship with the LORD. The only good times were when the people repented as a nation. God sent them some good judges who turned the tides for ten years, twenty years, forty years sometimes. But then, invariably, when that judge died, the people kind of turned back. For the last sixty years-plus, they had Samuel to listen to. He was the last judge and the first official prophet to the nation. There were some other prophetic folks but not one who had that official kind of capacity. And so the majority of the problem was the people just didn't want to listen to the LORD. They had bad leadership. You could blame some of it on the overseers, but when it came right down to it, it's the people. They didn't want to walk with God. Eventually that led them to ask for a king. They didn't want God's king, though; they wanted a king like all the other nations. And that brought Saul to the throne. We mentioned to you that chapters 13, 14 and 15 - which cover many years - really are the explanation from the LORD as to why Saul didn't make it: his campaign against the Philistines and then against the Amalekites - all of them fought in a way that Saul wanted and God didn't; not following His direction, not following His leading, defiant of God's direction even. And, in the first battle, he lost the right of succession for his sons, but in that second campaign, he lost his position. The LORD said, "You'll no longer be the king." Whenever Saul was confronted - and we went through it a couple of weeks ago - Saul explained himself with spiritual language, blame shifting, just outright lies. He certainly thought he had a better idea than the LORD did, and because of that, God set him aside. So, like I said, the whole experience left the old prophet just - who had faithfully served for so long - beside himself. In fact, you'll read at the end of chapter 15, that with Saul's rejection, Samuel, for a long time, just wept. He couldn't bring himself to ministry anymore. An old timer. But it seems to have let the wind out of his sails, and he just felt crushed by the whole thing - like his life hadn't done much. The people weren't doing well, and now we've lost the king.

But, in chapter 16, God called Samuel back to work; anointed a king. And so tonight we come to David. David's call to the ministry was private. It was undercover, if you will, in many ways. His introduction to Saul was slow and methodical; he would

just go to play, and then he would leave. But tonight, with this battle with Goliath - a story that I'm sure you know very well - David comes to national prominence. He comes to the place where Saul is no longer desired by the people. They now want David, and that, eventually, will turn the tide to where Saul's last vow in life is to kill David. "That's all I want to do...is kill him." And, for the next seven-plus years, that'll be his goal. But tonight we see God introducing the nation to their future king, and God begins to establish the one that He had chosen in a giant way - by dealing with this giant.

All right. Verse 1, "Now the Philistines gathered their armies together to battle, and were gathered at Sochoh, which belongs to Judah; they encamped between Sochoh and Azekah, in Ephes Dammim. And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered together, and they encamped in the Valley of Elah, and drew up in battle array against the Philistines. The Philistines stood on a mountain on one side, and Israel stood on a mountain on the other side, with a valley between them." I think we mention to you pretty consistently that the Philistines were the enemy of Israel during the days of David; the most powerful, ruthless and most-accomplished army anywhere to be found. The LORD had given relief to Israel through Saul's fighting; he was a good fighter from time to time. Saul never found the victory that God had for him in faith. Here we find the enemy - the Philistines - very deep into Israel's territory. They are within - if you know your maps at all - about ten miles of Bethlehem. They were standing on two mountain ranges, with this Valley of Elah in the middle. Those words, there at the end of verse 1, "Ephes Dammim," literally translate "blood drops." This was a Valley that had seen a lot of fighting, had been a place of tremendous battles, if you will.

When we go to Israel with our Israel groups, we stand in the middle of this Valley. It's hard to.....sometimes when you see buildings in Jerusalem, you go, "Well, this is where the upper room was," and you're thinking, "Yeah, it was here about sixty feet down" because it has been covered over so much. But when you go to the Elah Valley, it's pretty much the Elah Valley. Which is why we like the Galilee so much because there's not a lot of building; there's just a lot of land. And so this was definitely the place. In fact, I'll tell you how popular it is in Israel. They bring in whole truckloads of rocks - flat, smooth rocks - to dump in the riverbed so people go, "Oh, this is where David got his rocks." Everybody goes to the airport with rocks; and if they find you, they don't let you take 'em. But, anyway, your bag weighs 300 pounds. I wonder what's in there. And it's probably gonna be rocks.

Needless to say, we like going there because it's genuine; there's no way to really mess with it, if you will.

So get the picture in your mind - the Philistines, as tough as they can be, in foxholes on one side; the Jews on the other. A standoff. Neither was willing to take a full-scale attack, but they threatened each other. They looked across the DMZ, if you will, and then, eventually, their UFC champion, Goliath, came out to make his appearance.

So we read, in verse 4, "And a champion went out from the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath" (Goliath means "splendor"), "from Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span. He had a bronze helmet on his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail, and the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of bronze. And he had bronze armor on his legs and a bronze javelin between his shoulders. Now the staff of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and his iron spearhead weighed six hundred shekels; and a shield-bearer went before him." Goliath was 9'6" tall. A cubit is about 18". It's the length from your elbow to the top of your fingers. A span, roughly, is this (Pastor Jack demonstrates to us the "Shaka" sign, extending the thumb and his little finger while holding the three middle fingers curled). "Shaka" - hang loose - 6". Right? Nine and a half feet tall, very strong. A shekel weighs about half an ounce. So, quick addition - 150 pounds of armor. A spear that, the top of the spear, itself, weighed 20 pounds. I think the LORD just wants to tell us this is a bad-lookin' dude. Right? He is imposing, he's intimidating, and rightfully so, and he's on the wrong side; he's not with us, he's with them. And so he comes out to challenge anyone that wants to fight. He's just the toughest guy on the block.

In fact, notice that it says, here in verse 8, "Then he stood and cried out to the armies of Israel, and said to them, 'Why have you come out to line up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and you the servants of Saul? 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.' And the Philistine said, 'I defy the armies 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." Mark well the words "I defy." Here stands a man who threatens anyone, will take on all callers. Rather than many dying, "Let's fight one-on-one. The winner will have the other to serve us." And he growls, and he threatens, and he's huge. And the army,

notice from verse 11, cowered, "dismayed, greatly afraid." I would remind you that the reason the people picked Saul.....why? He was tall. Right? Head and shoulders above everyone else. Tough-lookin' guy. Good-looking guy but just....he could fight. And he could fight. But there's no one with Saul, Saul included, that wanted to take this guy's number on. Notice also that Goliath did not see the children of Israel as servants of God. He saw them as servants of Saul. And that's pretty much the reputation Israel had at this time. They were on their own. So, big Saul refuses to go out. If you remember back in chapter 14, the last couple of verses of chapter 14 said that Saul, when he began to pick his army, would just pick the strongest guys in town. So anybody that could fight was with Saul. So this wasn't just a bunch of guys that didn't want to be there and had been drafted. These were a bunch of guys that liked fighting. These were tough guys. Saul saw a lot in them that he wanted. And yet, in the line there, nobody was willing to move against this fellow, Goliath. Jonathan was in this group, and his armorbearer. We've read some pretty good things about them. They were men of faith who would go out and risk their necks, two against a thousand. But the LORD wasn't moving on Jonathan's heart either, and I think it's because it was David's day; God had chosen this was going to be David's coming-out party, if you will, and showing that God was with him. So he refused to come. Even Abner, who is the captain of the host; he is a nail-chewing Marine. We'll get into Abner as we go. He's afraid. Every one of Saul's valiant men is afraid. Every one declines Goliath's challenge.

Now, spiritually, Goliath is a representative of Satan. He stands against God's people. We cower in front of him in our own strength. There's no way we can fight and win. He comes to terrorize us as God's people; seeks to bring us into bondage, into captivity. He denies the God that we serve and wants to wipe us out. And the fact that he is so big, and his armor portrayed, he's the enemy that no flesh or blood can rid ourselves of. I mean, literally he represents the enemy that we fight, and there's just no way we can win.

But what a picture: Goliath taunting God's people as they cower in fear, unable and unwilling to respond. They find no strength in the LORD at all. And to make matters worse we will read, down in verse 16, that this went on twice a day for almost six weeks. When you got up in the morning, you didn't hear the chirping of the birds or the callings of the rooster; you heard this clown. "I defy!" Shut up! And at night before you went to bed, that's what you'd go to bed with - in your ears, ringin' - this clown who just could wipe you out. And how humiliating is this for God's people! Nearly six weeks. Even the bravest of men, no match for the

devil himself. We only know, in their history, a few men that may have stood up. Like I said, Jonathan would certainly be one. Maybe his armorbearer as well. But this was David's day to be in the limelight. This was God's way of putting David out to the nation. It was God's way of showing Israel that true leadership is found in a man who knows where his strength lies.

We read, in verse 12, "Now David was the son of that Ephrathite of Bethlehem Judah, whose name was Jesse, and who had eight sons. And the man was old, advanced in years, in the days of Saul. The three oldest sons of Jesse had gone to follow Saul to the battle. The names of his three sons who went to the battle were Eliab the firstborn, next to him Abinadab, and the third Shammah. David was the youngest. And the three oldest followed Saul. But David occasionally went and returned from Saul to feed his father's sheep at Bethlehem." So we don't know how long this took place, but for a while David's ministry was solely with his harp. He would go to sing and minister in music to a man that was now being tormented by a life that he'd chosen without God. David was the youngest of eight kids. He was quite a runt, I think, from everything that we read. In fact, his oldest brothers, three of them, were tough enough to be part of Saul's army. I think it was a tough family. David was not, maybe, the fighter of the family. He's the poet, he sings. Well, but he knows how to fight.....but only in the LORD. And so, remember when Samuel came to Jesse's house to pick a child that the only person that they didn't even bring in the house was David. So I don't know what that says about his family, but it was Samuel that finally had to say, "Maybe I didn't hear the LORD right. You got any more kids?" And he goes, "Yeah, I've got the little guy outside. We don't like to let him in the house." And David came in just because nobody else was picked. It seems like - because Jesse was so old - that David was probably a child born very late in his dad's life; maybe not planned to have this child, but now he is a shepherd of his father's sheep. He occasionally gets to go to the king's palace and play for the king.

We read, in verse 16, "And the Philistine drew near and presented himself forty days, morning and evening." Whenever you read the words "forty days and nights," in the Bible, not only is it usually exactly right in terms of time, but it is often a reference to the judgment or the testing time that God brings upon His people. So whenever you read "forty days and forty nights," you might just stop and look around and go, "Who's being put under the pressure here?" or "Who's being put to the test?" It is that place that God brings you when you come to the end of yourself and then God can begin to work in your life. So sometimes God gives us

the experience of the joy of not being involved with Him. And we might like it for a little while. But eventually you're gonna need His help, and then you realize, "Man, I don't like where I'm living," or, "I don't like how I'm going." And then, "When I seek the LORD, He doesn't respond." Well, that's kind of where Israel was. He needed to bring them to the end of themselves because, for the last 400 years, they haven't done very well at all. So He's waiting for them to come to the end of themselves, and the idea is that they get so helpless without Him that they might realize they need Him.

Here's what happens when God doesn't do that: we expect God to answer the minute we call. We may ignore Him for weeks on end, but the minute we have a need, we throw in the prayer, and, "LORD, where are You?" We want Him to respond immediately to our concerns. That's the way we see things. But usually we don't even start praying until our face is half a foot off the ground. People say these kinds of things, "Well, all we can do now is pray." Why don't you start there? "Well, I tried everything else." You're wasting your time. Why don't you start where something can actually happen? So, I think God sometimes has us wait until we just are out of ideas so that we can appreciate His mercy. There's a great verse in Isaiah 30:18, and I've loved it for years. It spoke a lot to me, I think, the first time I remember reading it. But it says, "The LORD will wait so that He might be gracious to you." And then it says, "Blessed are those who wait on the LORD." The LORD will wait until He can be merciful to you, and you'll be blessed if you'll wait on Him. That's the exchange. Right? You get to the point where you need God's help, His mercy, and then He can bless you as you wait for Him to work. It draws you in.

And it looks like that with the nation. They're in a position where God's going to bring in a new man, filled with His Spirit. He's going to touch the heart of the people as well. And at least Israel, during David's reign, will be at the zenith of all that they could have been and will be until the LORD, I think, returns to rule and reign. Don't lose sight of the fact that God had a deliverer ready. Right? They're in an impossible situation, but God has a guy picked out to help; a man who would be the voice and the hand and the power of God; a man who by natural wisdom or by physical prowess or by military prudence - absolutely unqualified. You couldn't pick this guy. You might as well have sent that nail-chewing Abner out there, who was not a very spiritual guy but a tough guy. But God doesn't choose him. He chooses the weak and the foolish. So we have a chance. (Laughing) Right? We qualify. Absolutely. We absolutely qualify. "God has chosen the foolish things of the world

to confound the wise, the weak things of the world to put to shame those that are mighty" (1 Corinthians 1:27). That's us. God can use us. But this was going to be far more than a physical battle; this was a spiritual war. These were God's people. They were facing an enemy they couldn't beat, and they needed God's help. And for six weeks, every morning, every night, everyone in that camp was reminded about how weak they were. Their fearfulness, their mortality, their bravado fell to the ground. You know how guys in the army are. Everybody's tough as nails. (Pastor Jack laughs) But not in this army. Their end might be their shame. They heard it twice a day. And into that shame, David walks - this young, little runty, anointed-to-be-king-nobody-knows-it guy, who plays a mean harp. And he brings his boldness and his faith in God, and it stands out even more clearly with the backdrop of the fearfulness in the camp and the lack of godliness and the lack of spiritual leadership and the lack of a king who really knows God at all. They're just frozen in time.

As God would have it, verse 17, "Then Jesse said to his son David, 'Take now for your brothers an ephah of this dried grain and these ten loaves, and run to your brothers at the camp.' " (Ten miles, "You run," or maybe get on a donkey.) " 'And carry these ten cheeses to the captain of their thousand, and see how your brothers fare, and bring back news of them.' So David rose early in the morning, left the sheep with a keeper, and took the things and went as Jesse had commanded him. And he came to the camp as the army was going out to the fight and shouting for the battle. For Israel and the Philistines had drawn up in battle array, army against army. And David left his supplies in the hand of the supply keeper, ran to the army, and came and greeted his brothers." We suspect, since he left in the morning, he arrived there maybe in the morning time when the guy came out to yell and scream. "Go see how your brothers are doing." I love God's sovereignty, don't you? You can't miss the fact that the LORD works on both ends to accomplish His purposes. "Take your brothers some food. Make sure you give their commander some food. He loves the cheese. Give him the cheese." Nothing wrong with keeping the commander happy. And David arrives about the time that Goliath is coming out for his twice-a-day mockery of the children of Israel. We read, in verse 19, that there were some skirmishes going on, that they were fighting each day, if you will, at least a little bit. But really not too much was going on. Goliath continued to taunt. We read, in verse 20, that David had left the sheep with a keeper; he had probably taken a chariot, I would think, going the ten miles. But, in any event, he comes to see his brothers. He drops off the food.

He goes to greet them, verse 23, "Then as he talked with them, there was the champion, the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name, coming up from the armies of the Philistines; and he spoke according to the same words. So David heard them. And all the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him and were dreadfully afraid. So the men of Israel said, 'Have you seen this man who has come up? Surely he has come up to defy Israel; and it shall be that the man who kills him the king will enrich with great riches, will give him his daughter, and give his father's house exemption from taxes in Israel.' " So David meets his brothers, Goliath comes out to taunt, and amazing, when God's out of the picture, how much fear runs the show. Right? These are God's people, by the way, but they're all hiding behind someone else's skirt. But I love God's timing. David shows up about the time this guy comes out to bark and yell and scream. The Incredible Hulk. Everyone runs, and then they begin to talk to David because he's new, he's visiting, he stands in awe. "By the way, you know there's a bounty on that guy's head." "What is it?" "Well, the king has made a beautiful offer to whoever would defeat him. If you'll go out and fight him on behalf of the nation, you'll be rich, you get the girl, and you get tax-free living." Right? Sad kind of condition for a powerless man like Saul to try to purchase a spiritual victory, motivating others with temporal rewards. It really is the worst way to try to get things done; this found amongst the people that God had chosen to be His own. Saul appeals to the flesh of his soldiers, not to their faith in God or to the goodness of God or to defending the name of God. He even puts his own daughter up as a reward. This guy is too much, isn't he?

But any kind of allurements by appealing to the flesh, I think, when you have to motivate people like that, it's a pretty good sign that they've lost awareness of God's presence, and they've certainly lost any love for the LORD. There was a church down the street from where I used to live that would have "Fill-a-Pew Night," and the congregation would be told - and I only know because it was out on the marquee every week - that if you could fill a pew, bring people, you could get an entry to get a bicycle. So we'd have a raffle. You fill the pew, you get your name, you get a bike! And, as a kid, I used to say to Mom, "We should go to church there" because the Catholic Church I went to was in Latin. They gave us nothin'. These guys were givin' up bikes, you know. But the church died; in a matter of eight years, they were gone, and they put up some condos. I guess appealing to the flesh didn't work - the raffles, get people to church. How 'bout you go to church because you love Jesus, and you want to know His Word, and you desire to have fellowship with His people. That's really the only motivation you can have, and everything He'll promise to do for you.

But here's Saul, man. He's embarrassed, he's the king. No one will fight. Even Saul, who's the biggest dude in the camp. He won't go. So he's offering these guys.....he's offerin' 'em up like sacrifices. "I'll give you all this," figuring he'll never have to pay because they're gonna get killed. He says to his honey, "Don't worry, honey. It doesn't matter how ugly they are, you're never gonna have to marry them. They're gonna die! That'll be the end of it. I'll walk away with my head up. We tried....we lost." Which is, I think, the way that he eventually will send David forth as well. I don't think he cared about David or had any conviction David was going to be able to win this battle.

Well we read, in verse 26, "Then David spoke to the men who stood by him, saying, 'What shall 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 defy the armies' " (not of Saul but) " 'of the living God?' And the people answered him in this manner, saying, 'So shall it be done for the man who kills him.' " David is so appalled with what he just heard. Now, remember, this is a teenage kid from the farm, anointed with God's Spirit, called to be God's man, who walks into this very sophisticated bunch of older and tougher guys. "All right. Tell me again." And he asks the question, "Who does this guy think he is? Who's offering a reward?" And the way it reads, it reads in plural terms. In other words, the implication is he didn't just ask one guy. "All right, let me ask this guy." "Really?! Come here. Tell me again." He couldn't believe what he was hearing with his ears. In fact, David's heart is so stirred as he hears the name of God being put to open shame. We never read that he mentions anything about Goliath's size. That's my first thing I mention. "Well, yeah, I can see he's huge." David could care less. All he hears is the name of his God being blasphemed, and, "We're God's army, and we're God's people. Why do we need to offer a reward to defend His name?" To David it just made absolutely no sense.

Well, at this point, as David is asking everyone with incredulity, "Really?!" we read, in verse 28, "Now Eliab his oldest brother heard when he spoke to the men; and Eliab's anger was aroused against David, and he said, 'Why did you come down here? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your pride and the insolence of your heart, for you have come down to see the battle.' " I think that Eliab didn't like David because Eliab was the first guy to get passed over by Samuel. In fact, if you remember the story, Samuel went, "Maybe this is the guy," and the LORD goes, "No, that's not the guy." "Well, he sure looks like the guy." "Yeah, you don't want to look as man sees. Trust Me on this. I don't see it."

And then he had to be passed over. So notice his words are pretty biting. Right? He's probably been ashamed in his own house. David wasn't their favorite. He's now being accused - with the rest of the army - as not having enough indignation against the enemy's words or the slander of God and that he's afraid and that they would even consider a reward. And David, little teenage David, is calling them all out on that. "You need what to do that? You've got to be kidding me! You have to be rewarded to honor the LORD." And so he lashes out. He accuses David of pride, of self-promotion, that he has an insignificant job. Notice he says, "Yeah, you've got those few sheep of yours. Really big deal." And that he has an insolent heart. The word "insolent" just means evil, one that is prone to do the wrong thing. If he only knew how God felt about David. David had not been considered part of the family. Samuel drew him in. And I think that sometimes when the LORD begins to work in your life, the first people who criticize you - often it comes from your own family. Later it comes from everybody else, but it usually starts with your own family. Hopefully then they get saved later on as they watch you. But David was catching it from his brother. Well David, at that point, speaks up in faith to which he immediately is given opposition to his motives being questioned. David doesn't respond with, "Shut up, you chicken!" He's honest, but he's compassionate. Right?

So, in verse 29, we read, "And David said, 'What have I done now? Is there not a cause?' Then he turned from him toward another and said the same thing; and these people answered him as the first ones did." So this discussion went on, it would seem, for quite some time. He didn't allow his brother's criticism to deter him. He literally defends himself with, "What have I done? Dad sent me here to bring you food. I hear what this guy says about our God. Isn't there reason you should be irate, upset? How come you're not upset?" I guess that's a good question for the church today. Why are we not more upset? Why aren't we out preaching Christ more, rather than being so ashamed of Him, as if being a Christian's the wrong thing? It's the right thing to be.....in every regard. But David was moved by his own convictions. He didn't care about the convictions of others. Today the world needs Jesus more than ever, and the only people who are going to do anything about it - you and me, the church, people of God. So notice, in verse 30, that David gave up with his brother. "If that's the way you feel, maybe I can talk some sense into the next guy." And he went from one to the other which, by the way, is a great way to deal with opposition. If you voice your concerns, and they don't want to listen, just move on. Pastor Chuck used to say to us, as young pastors, "God has called you to be pastors, not firemen. So don't run around tryin'

to put out every little fire in the church. Just let 'em burn, man. They'll figure it out. You're not a fireman." David just went, "All right, fine." He loved the LORD. This wasn't acceptable to him. He takes his cause to others and then to others. He hears the same arguments, the same offer, the same fear from everyone. No one seems to care, or if they care, there's nothing they feel like they can do about it.

This went on long enough, verse 31, that we read, "Now when the words which David spoke were heard, they reported them to Saul; and he sent for him." David was not a quiet guy here. He's the talk of the camp. It's been goin' on for six weeks. We assume that it's the last day of the forty days because he's about to die, this guy. This is day forty. This has been goin' on a long time. And so David is now called to Saul. I don't know if he recognized that he played for him; I suspect that he did. But I don't know if he really knew much about him. He was a king, after all. "Then David said to Saul," (when he went to see him), verse 32, " 'Let no man's heart fail because of him;' " (of Goliath) " 'your servant will go and fight with this Philistine.' " Come on with your bad self. Isn't he the best?! This is my guy, right here. "Don't worry. I'll handle it." Humble but yet determined. Notice he called himself Saul's "servant." "I'm your servant."

Verse 33, "And Saul said to David, 'You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for you are a youth, and he a man of war from his youth.' " "You're an inexperienced teenager, David. He's a third-generation giant and killer. Not a good fight." David's answer to him is this, verse 34, " 'Your servant used to keep his father's sheep, and when a lion or a bear came and took a lamb out of the flock, I went out after it and struck it, and delivered the lamb from its mouth; and when it arose against me, I caught it by its beard, and struck and killed it.' " I'm not sure I want to hang around with David, either. Verse 36, " 'Your servant has killed both lion and bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, seeing he has defied the armies of the living God.' Moreover David said, 'The LORD, who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.' And Saul said to David," ("All right, go ahead with your bad self!") " 'Go, and the LORD be with you!' " Now, David's answer, I think, is the lesson. He explains how, in the quiet life of a shepherd boy, alone and away from the crowd - not even very much appreciated by his own family - he began to learn firsthand what it meant to trust God: trust God with his life, with his job, with his responsibility, with the wonderful resources that God would make available to those who would trust Him. And he had experienced this, even as a

teenage kid - God's powerful hand, God's provision in the smaller (if you can call that smaller) trials. A bear and a lion seemed like nothin' compared to this guy. But the idea was God had given David miraculous abilities, and he was the first one to say, "This was the LORD." While everybody else was kind of walking away from God, this young teenage boy, out in the farmlands, was learning to trust God; and day by day, while no one was watching, David had developed his understanding of God. By the way, this is always the way God raises people up that He wants to serve Him. You have to be taught in private to be able to stand faithfully in public. You'll find that with Paul, too. When he gets saved, he spends years out in the wilderness learning from God firsthand before he comes back to Damascus and tries his hand at witnessing. Oh, it doesn't go well, but he's got his convictions about God and the Word of God established in his heart. So, this isn't unusual.

That Scripture in Psalm 91:1, "He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty," that's where you learn. You can sit in church here and listen, but you're gonna learn when you take what you learn and you apply it and watch God be faithful. So David comes out of the fields facing a 9'6" guy, overwhelming everyone in sight except David. Because he doesn't see 9'6". He sees God Almighty sitting on the throne. To him, this was just another day in the life of a believer walking with God. So, his assessments are quite different than everyone else's around him. And he's convinced of that. He had learned to trust the LORD. David had met God in secret, and that put him, by the way, one up on everyone on the battlefield and, most of all, one up on Goliath who only saw his power. "Look how big I am, look how strong I am." Yeah, look how quickly you're gonna fall over.

So, I guess the lesson - maybe in a phrase - is this: ministry always comes out of abundance. You don't do ministry to be filled. You go and do ministry because you're full. Right? So ministry happens when you're full, and God can pour you out, and then you can receive and be poured out again. "I think I should be an usher. I think I should go to the convalescent home. I gotta do something for the LORD." It's ridiculous! God doesn't need all of that. You do it because you're full, and now God gives you something to do, and you have something to offer. It isn't.....some people, they try to substitute doing for God for being with Him. You say, "Well, do you know the LORD?" "Yeah, I'm an usher." Big deal. "But do you know Him?" "Yeah, I lead worship." "Great! Do you know Him?" That's the issue. David came out of the shepherd field knowing God. He hadn't trained fighting with Goliath, although he was pretty good with that slingshot of his. But he didn't think he was

that good. He took five rocks, not one. You don't want to wing a guy that's 9'6". It wasn't a lack of faith. He just was being responsible. I heard a sermon once, "Oh, David, if he'd had more faith would only have taken one rock." You're an idiot! I'm takin' a whole box of rocks and a gun if they'll let me. (Laughing) And then I might be in a tree. I don't know. Ministry comes out of abundance. Always so. Ministry is always to be an outgrowth of a personal relationship with God - an overflow even as it is in David's life here. David had been trained in a school that Goliath knew nothing about and that Saul had sadly neglected for years - the school of personal relationship with God. And notice what it had done in young David: it produced in him confidence. He was so sure that God would use him that even a spiteful older brother, a discouraging Saul, or a menacing Goliath couldn't change his mind. That's how sure he was that God would help him because God did not want to be dishonored. Something had to be done. This was unacceptable. David doesn't say to Saul, "I'm quick, and I can outrun him." He simply says, "I know God, and that's all I need. And you don't have to worry. We're gonna win because God's with us." That's pretty powerful faith, isn't it? Borne out of the experience daily of walking with God. I'm so sure that Saul had no confidence in the LORD and that Saul saw this as his way out. "Sacrifice this little punk. I save face. Okay, we are gonna get slaughtered but we're gonna get slaughtered anyway." So, heartless Saul hadn't changed any; he was ready to cough this guy up.

Verse 38 says this, "So Saul clothed David with his armor, and he put a bronze helmet on his head; he also clothed him with a coat of mail. David fastened his sword to his armor and tried to walk, for he had not tested them. And David said to Saul, 'I cannot walk with these, for I have not tested them.' So David took them off." Big Saul, remember, head and shoulders; small little David. But Saul has far more confidence in his armor than the LORD. But he's trying to be helpful. David have never used any. It felt way too bulky. He took it off, and he went with what he knew - a slingshot. He was good at that. And he was pretty good at his confidence in the LORD. He came filled to the battle. Because it takes more than method to win spiritual battles. It takes faith. Right? And it takes the resources that God makes available to you and me. It'd be great if the armor fit, but it didn't. Ephesians 6:10-18 talks about the armor that you and I can wear in our battles with the devil. But, look, Saul's not the best spiritual advisor here; he's a man way out to lunch, so to speak, spiritually. And David hadn't learned this from God. So he brings to the battle what he had learned - he sticks to what he knew. It's like those verses - and we'll get to them in a couple of weeks on Sunday morning - where Paul says, "Though we walk in the flesh, we don't war according to

the flesh. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but they're mighty in God through the pulling down of strongholds" (2 Corinthians 10:3-4). God'll enable us to win the battle. So, Saul's armor provided no protection for David at all, just far more concern. The only part of the armor that God gives us in Ephesians that is offensive (not offensive, but on the offensive) is the sword of the Spirit. Right? And we have to handle that well. The armor of man would have left David a sitting duck. He'd have been dead. So those words, "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit says the LORD" (Zechariah 4:6) are repeated over and over in the Scriptures. Right? We need to learn that for ourselves. What did David write in Psalm 33? "No king is saved by the multitude of an army; a mighty man is not delivered by great strength. A horse is a vain hope for safety; neither shall it deliver any by its great strength. Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him, on those who hope in His mercy, to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine. Our soul waits for the LORD; He is our help and our shield" (verses 16-20). That's what David had going. That's what you have tonight. You have a relationship with an Almighty God that can handle anything. So no sense running when Goliath raises up his ugly head because "greater is He that is in you" (1 John 4:4). So, go ahead and walk in faith. Love others, forgive those who offend you, share His Word, build in the sunshine, learn with the lions and the bears so that you'll be ready when Goliath shows up. Because show up he will.

Verse 40, "Then he took his staff in his hand; and he chose for himself five smooth stones" (that had been dropped in the book by the truck; laughing; it does take some of the glamor off) "from the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag, in a pouch which he had, and his sling was in his hand. And he drew near to the Philistine. So the Philistine came, and began drawing near to David, and the man who bore the shield went before him. And when the Philistine looked about and saw David, he disdained him; for he was only a youth, ruddy and good-looking." Anything but a fighter. Verse 43, "So the Philistine said to David, 'Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?' And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. And the Philistine said to David, 'Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field!' " That's pretty scary, isn't it? You're a little sixteen-year-old punk with a slingshot, and this guy's spittin' blood. I don't know. It reminded me a little bit of the story of Elisha with Gehazi, the servant at Dothan, when they were surrounded by the Syrians (there in 2 Kings 6), and the servant was terrified. But Elisha wasn't because he knew the LORD was with him. And so Elisha prayed, "LORD, show him what I see," and Gehazi's eyes were opened, and he saw, surrounding the enemies, all these angels of the LORD outgunning and

outmanning the whole army that had surrounded them. And Elisha said, "See? We'll be all right." And he goes, "All right!" He could see it for himself. But it was a spiritual vision. So, as God showed Gehazi what Elisha already saw, look at Goliath. All he sees is this puny kid with his own strength, and he just makes him angrier. But David saw something else. He saw God's Spirit with him, and he knew very well that everything was going to be just fine, that the battle belonged to the LORD.

So we read, in verse 45, "Then David said to the Philistine, 'You come to me with a sword, 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, and I will strike you and take your head from you.' " ("Yeah, that's what I'm gonna do!) " 'And this day I will give the carcasses of the camp of the Philistines to the birds of the air and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. Then all this assembly shall know that the LORD does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is the LORD's, and He will give you into our hands.' " I like this guy. I love this bold declaration. He's in the minority, he's outgunned, he's outmanned. He has no support behind him. Nobody. Everyone is thinking he's gonna die. But he's gonna fight the fight. "Whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is that victory that overcomes the world - even our faith" (1 John 5:4). "The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous run to it, and they are safe" (Proverbs 18:10).

Verse 48, "So it was, when the Philistine arose and came and drew near to meet David," (I love this, look at this) "that David hurried and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine." Deet deet deedly deet deet deet. You can just see David. Right? Little legs. He's runnin' right at the enemy, this big ol' dude. Verse 49, "Then David put his hand in his bag and took out a stone; and he slung it and struck the Philistine in his forehead, so that the stone sank into his forehead, and he fell on his face to the earth." (I love this story. Good for you, David.) Verse 50, "So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, and struck the Philistine and killed him. But there was no sword in the hand of David. Therefore David ran and stood over the Philistine, took his sword" (that's a heavy dude) "and drew it out of its sheath and killed him, and cut off his head with it. And when the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled." (Of course they did.) David had been prepared for this moment for years but practiced for hours on the hillsides of Bethlehem. Far from running away, David runs at the enemy. He's not like.....I

know Christians, and maybe you do, too, whose whole goal is to survive it. "Just waitin' for the rapture. I'm just hangin' on for dear life." They're not gaining any ground. They're not winning any souls. They're not defeating any enemies. They're not overcoming any of their flesh. They're just waiting to make it..... "I'm just waiting to make it." They sit in the corner, (Pastor Jack stands with his arms crossed) and they just wait. They don't do nothin', they don't say nothin'. "I just hope Jesus comes tomorrow." I love David. "Come here, buddy! I got a head to cut off, and it's gonna be yours!" I like David. He runs at Goliath. As Christians, the victory for us is more than simply enduring on defense. We're called to invade the enemy's territory, aren't we, with the good news of Jesus - looking to win the battle. He's a stud, David, isn't he? He's not backin' away, man. I like him. So much.

So, look, contrast the picture here. Here's Saul and his army and David and the giant. I mean, they (the army) were fearful, they were dreading, they were fleeing, they were hiding. David was upset. The LORD's name was being taken in vain. "I'll go fight him." They saw the greatness and the power and the threat of their enemy - the greatness of the giant. He saw the greatness of his God. Only David had a good perspective because it seems to me if you get your eyes on the giant, you'll get less and less confident, and your problems will just get bigger. But if you get to know the LORD, I don't think anybody could stand in His way. The better you know that, the less you'll be concerned. How often, though, we have our eyes in the wrong place, and we completely lose our perspective. And that's something that I think we can learn from David. Right? Psalm 56:9 says, "When I cry out to You, then my enemies will turn back; this I know, because God is for me." That's a great verse. God's for me. He's gonna fight my battles. "If the Lord be for us, who can be against us?" Isn't that in Romans 8? (verse 31) He's gonna prevent me from falling. So, I think the big lesson from David is: you want to do well in battle, learn to walk with God every day. Bring to the battle your daily relationship experiences with the LORD. Pray and watch Him answer. Lay hands on the sick. Forgive those who harm you. Bless those who persecute you. Do the things God wants you to do so that you can see God work. David doesn't - and I don't read David, anywhere, after he was anointed king - say to anyone, "Well, I know I'm king. I shouldn't be watchin' sheep anymore. When am I gonna get promoted?" He was just faithful. Right? And he left home that day - he would have never known this was awaiting him. He went to see a brother who didn't like him very much - to bring food to him because dad had asked him to do it. So, be careful not to carve out a place for yourself, but if you'll just be faithful where

you are, God'll open the doors. Right? David trusted God, but he brought his slingshot. Does that make sense? He trusted the LORD. Not.....there's some goofy faith people. "Well, I'm just gonna trust the LORD and do nothing." That's dumb. God takes up where you can't. But you're always obligated to do what you can. There's that balance. You work with the LORD. He can do it all without you. That's true. But He expects you to be responsible. He took five stones, even though he only needed one. And, like I said, it would have been upsetting if he'd have just winged him. So we do our part, we do our best, we commit the rest. God won't work through half-hearted efforts, poor planning, lack of diligence. He wants you to be diligent. So, hey, run at the enemy, and let's go win this thing. Stay in fellowship, stay away from sin, be ready at every moment to step up in faith. And here's my question to you - what confidences have you developed in the LORD this year that would allow you to be more devoted to Him and more ready to work when God sets the work before you? What have you learned, and what are you convinced of this year that you weren't in January or in May or last month? What are you learning? Because David was able to say to Saul, "Hey, look, I've learned something about God. I had a lion, I had a...." Pretty good braggin' stories, right? "I killed a lion with my bare hands." That's amazing! Even if he got it with a slingshot, that's amazing! Because you'd think a lion could get mad! What confidences have you developed or are in the process of developing in the LORD as a result of your daily relationship with Him? That helps. Keep an eye out because that's certainly the lesson of the chapter.

Well, let's go with the results here as we end tonight. Verse 52, "Now the men of Israel and Judah arose and shouted," ("Yay, David!") "and pursued the Philistines as far as the entrance of the valley and to the gates of Ekron" (one of the Philistine big cities). "And the wounded of the Philistines fell along the road to Shaaraim, even as far as Gath and Ekron. Then the children of Israel returned from chasing the Philistines, and they plundered their tents. And David took the head of the Philistine and brought it to Jerusalem, but he put his armor in his tent. When Saul saw David going out against the Philistine, he said to Abner, the commander of the army, 'Abner, whose son is this youth?' And Abner said, 'As your soul lives, O king, I do not know.' So the king said, 'Inquire whose son this young man is.' Then, as David returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, Abner took him and brought him before Saul with the head of the Philistine in his hand." Great. David ran around all day with it. Kids. What are you gonna do with kids? Verse 58, "And Saul said to him, 'Whose son are you, young man?' So David answered, "I am the

son of your servant Jesse the Bethlehemite.' " It's amazing. So, with that being said, it won't be long before Saul offers David a job. And wouldn't you?

Maybe tonight you are facing some giants in your life. I don't know what they are, but by learning to walk with God every day, you will be ready for the difficult problems when they come your way. The nation had been duped for years and for the last three or four decades by the likes of Saul. The first thing you see in the nation when David steps forward is activity and confidence. They go to battle their enemies, they're shouting, and they're pushing the enemy out of their land. Be careful who you follow and who you lead. So, David's popularity here takes a huge turn, as you can imagine. He becomes the hero of the nation. Jonathan, Saul's boy, absolutely falls in love with him; they have this relationship that is second to none, spiritually. God had touched both young men's hearts even though Jonathan was quite a bit older than David was. It won't be long when, even in the next chapter, we'll read of the people singing about how David has slain ten thousands and Saul thousands. And Saul will get jealous fairly quickly, resent David, and in the next couple of chapters, he'll determine that he's just gonna kill him. "I'm just gonna kill him." And it'll be private at first and then public very soon. But that's for another day. We don't have time to do chapter 18.

I remember, I was thinking tonight.....I'll pray real quick, I promise.....I was thinking for years, we would go out to listen to Pastor Chuck teach on Sunday nights, and he would go through the Bible. And if you ever heard Pastor Chuck, he's very deliberate. His cadence was pretty slow. In fact, all the kids at the Bible school would buy cassette players (when that was the thing) that could play at one-and-a-half speed because they'd make you go through all of Chuck's tapes so you'd put it on one-and-a-half speed, and you could actually get through a study. You know? Because Chuck has these pregnant pauses, "Well....." But I remember goin' on Sunday nights, and the studies would start at 7:30 at night, and there would be 3000 kids in their 20's there. And he would go from 7:30 till a quarter to ten, and we'd be so mad when he stopped. We'd have chants like this, "One more chapter, one more chapter....." I'm waitin' for that day. (Laughing and clapping) But it won't be tonight.

Submitted by Maureen Dickson  
July 26, 2019