

"Preparing for that Day"

Last week we took a look at the downfall of the first king of Israel, Saul. The cause of his downfall was because he feared "humans, who have but a breath in their nostrils" more than he feared "God." Saul was unable to walk the path that followed the heart of the Lord; as written in 1 Samuel 15:26, **"I will not go back with you. You have rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord has rejected you as king over Israel."**

The bible doesn't hide but writes of the sins committed, even by a king. It's a book that openly and truly writes about "humans who have but a breath in their nostrils." And we are able to discover many valuable treasures from it.

Today we'll be taking a look at the second king of Israel and successor of King Saul, King David. Even to this day, David is admired by people all over the world including the Jewish people. However, him too, does the bible not reveal as a perfect being but writes of his weakness and failures. The bible describes the two sides of David, just as how it would any other person. Today let's look at what we can especially emulate from David's life, then next week we'll focus on his failures.

Saul feared the general public. However, unlike Saul, David had a completely different view of the public. We can get a glimpse of this when we take a look at him as a young man.

David lived around 1000 BC; and as we've talked about it in previous weeks, during this time Israel had its longtime enemy Philistine, and war would often breakout between them. Obviously, missiles weren't flying around back in those days; this was a one-to-one battle between men with spears or swords.

There was a Philistine man called Goliath. He was about 9 feet 5 inches tall. Baba the Giant, a Japanese pro-wrestler is said to be 6 feet 86 inches, so Goliath was 2 feet 62 inches taller than Baba the Giant. Goliath was a Philistine champion who wore a bronze helmet, a coat of mail that weighted 125lbs and carried a spear that weighed 15lbs. At the front lines, he would shout challenges at the Israelites for 40days saying "Send me a man who will fight with me!" (1 Samuel 17:4-10).

The Israelites were terrified and deeply shaken by this Philistine giant, Goliath. No one dared to step up and say "I will go!" The troops feared that they would certainly die in a single combat with Goliath of "kill or be killed."

David, still a young boy during this tense time, was unable to join the army and was taking care of the sheep at home. One day his father told him to bring lunch to his three brothers who were in the army. David would arrive just as Goliath was shouting his challenge to the army of Israel, as usual.

Seeing this David says, **"Who is this pagan Philistine anyway, that he is allowed to defy the armies of the living God?"** David sees the same Goliath as the others see, but he didn't see this warrior as a terrifying giant, instead he saw him as, before the Lord, a "mere human who have but a breath in their nostrils." When King Saul heard that David was asking questions, he sent for him. He must have felt David's overflowing spirit because he gives David his own armor and has him prepared for battle.

Israel must have been at the end of its rope to have David, who wasn't even in the army, take on Goliath. In the end, David doesn't wear the helmet, armor and even sword provided because he wasn't use to them. Instead, he faces Goliath with his sling and five smooth stones he picked out from a stream. Seeing David, Goliath curses him by the names of his gods. But David says:

"You come to me with a sword, a spear, and 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 taunted. This day the Lord will deliver you up into my hands... that all this assembly may know that the Lord does not deliver by sword or by spear; for the battle is the Lord's and He will give you into our hands." (1 Samuel 17:45-47)

When David took out the first stone from his bag and slung it, it struck Goliath on his forehead and he fell on his face to the ground. The battle ended just like that. David didn't even use the five stones he had ready, but one; it was settled with one swing of his sling. Psalm 33:13-18 records the song written by David in later years, thought to have been about this time.

The Lord looks from heaven; He sees all the sons of men; From His dwelling place He looks out on all the inhabitants of the earth, He who fashions the hearts of

them all, He who understands all their works. The king is not saved by a mighty army; A warrior is not delivered by great strength. A horse is a false hope for victory; Nor does it deliver anyone by its great strength. Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him, On those who hope for His loving kindness.

As David faces Goliath, he says: **"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 (1 Samuel 17:37)."** These words came from experience. As David tended his sheep, he experienced God's protection from fierce lions and bears. And I'm sure David used the same sling and stone method to take down those lions and bears that attacked.

The stone that took down the lions and bears, took down Goliath with a hit on the forehead. Was it coincidence that the first stone struck Goliath in his weak spot? No, this was the power of God who stood by David-David who clearly fixed his eyes and feared the Lord. At the same time, we can't imagine how many times David must have practiced slinging stones day after day. David wasn't only prepared technically but also spiritually-trusting God in such a critical moment.

The Israelites were terrified and deeply shaken, not one was able to step forward to take on Goliath's challenge. Yet, David stepped forward and boldly declared, **"You come to me with a sword, a spear, and 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 taunted. This day the Lord will deliver you up into my hands."**

These words didn't just suddenly come upon David, nor was it a bluff. It was a result of his daily devotion to God. Yes, David was young, but knew the power God always brought when God was present in him; and this was deeply etched in his heart.

We as Christians should be with our Lord daily, so whenever "that day" may come, we'll be equipped. In this way, David was able to defeat Goliath with "the power of God" and "what God has equipped him with."

There are times in our lives when we have to fight, just like how David did. These will be sudden emergencies, so when we face them we'll try to equip ourselves in various ways. But by then it's too late. Daily devotion is what brings us victory. So when that day comes, our preparation would have us fully equipped and protected.

David's victory over Goliath brought him from being a simple shepherd to a captain of King Saul's army. And because God was with him, David performs great things everywhere he goes. In fact, his popularity spreads so much that in the cities they sang, **"Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands."** When this reaches Saul's ears, he obviously can't keep calm. From around that time, Saul becomes unstable, lifting a spear many times to kill David (the bible in fact says that an evil spirit from God came forcefully on Saul). As David feared for his life more and more, he escapes from Saul's presence and Saul would persistently pursue David. David describes himself escaping like **"a dead dog, a flea (1 Samuel 24:14)."** For David, it was "out of the frying pan into the fire" as he experienced a new battle, different from that of Goliath's.

During the chase from Saul and his men, David had the definitive opportunity to take Saul's life twice. One such opportunity was in a cave; David's men even said, "Now's your opportunity!" when he had the chance to kill Saul. Yet, regardless of Saul being at sword's point, David proves to Saul that he wasn't trying to harm him by cutting a piece of Saul's robe (1 Samuel 24:1-7). But then David's conscience began bothering him and says, **"The Lord forbid that I should do such a thing to my master, the Lord's anointed or lay my hand on him; for he is the anointed of the Lord (1 Samuel 24:6)."**

On a certain night, David again encounters a similar opportunity. When he slipped into Saul's camp, he found Saul and his men sleeping. This surely was a chance to kill Saul with just a thrust of a spear. But David again says, **"Don't destroy him! Who can lay a hand on the Lord's anointed and be guiltless? As surely as the Lord lives, the Lord himself will strike him, or his time will come and he will die, or he will go into battle and perish (1 Samuel 26:9-10)."**

The man was half-mad going after his life, yet David didn't lose respect. Why was this? Was Saul a good king to David? No, that wasn't the case. Saul was after David's life with eager eyes. Speaking of intention to murder, he was filled with madness! David feared laying his hand on the Lord's anointed one. David didn't fear the Saul who had but a breath in his nostrils, but feared the Lord who gave *him* life.

The man who was after him was at sword's point. In a situation of kill to save oneself or to be killed, we as human beings would most likely not hesitate to strike

out of self-defense. Do you think in such a moment, this thought all of a sudden came upon David from heaven? No. Just as how David defeated Goliath without fear or agitation through preparation, David's daily devotion to the Lord prepared him for this, which kept his words and action in line.

David knew that the Lord anoints those who He has chosen. To tell you the truth, David himself was anointed by the Lord through Samuel. David *remembered* the feeling of anointment dripping from his head, *thought* daily of the calling given to him directly from God, *accepted* this divine calling as dignified and *knew* that such a thing cannot be taken away by a human.

David was the first man in the history of Israel who was closest to the Lord. He was a king, a politician and a soldier. There are many people like him in the bible, but David possessed a gift that none other had. Do you know what that is? We rarely think about it, but it was clearly an important part of David. Yes, he was an extraordinary poet and songwriter as seen throughout the bible. The book of Psalms contains many songs he wrote which he sung to instruments. All these poems were songs about God and his relationship with the Lord. That is, David lived thinking about God's unending grace, God's greatness, and God's power and comfort every day. Being a poet and songwriter, it makes David a man of words. He would take to heart the word of God that spoke to him and meditated on them daily. He was able to defeat Goliath and was able to obey and decide according to God's will when necessary because he was with God every day.

I once went to a church whose pastor was giving a message series titled "Facing your Giants." This pastor called these "big trials" that stood in our way, "giants." At times we need to face these giants. It may be an illness, a financial problem, a household problem or even a loss. Just as how Goliath stood before David, these giants will at times suddenly appear before us too. The fanatical Saul going after the life of David was David's "giant" that persistently chased after him.

Even though David was surrounded by these giants from all sides, his heart was fixed on God and he was ready. David was already prepared and knew how to face these giants because he was equipped. He was able to defeat these giants because God's power came with all the preparation he had. David once sang this song:

"How blessed is the man who has made the Lord his trust, And has not turned to the proud, nor to those who lapse into falsehood. Many, O Lord my God, are the wonders which You have done, And Your thoughts toward us; There is none to compare with You. If I would declare and speak of them, They would be too numerous to count" (Psalm 40:4-5).

It would be hard to express all of the many facets of David's greatness in words but it lies in him *knowing* God's divine work and how much God loves and cares for him. He didn't acquire this in a day, but was able to understand this because of his daily devotion to the Lord. Though David faced all kinds of giants, because of his preparations he had many drawers he could pull from.

Let us make time to for our Lord in our daily lives by being in God's word and prayer. So when giants suddenly appear and take a swing at us, we will be protected and be able to dodge that swing. I believe that we'll be guided to the best decisions when a giant shakes up our lives. When we steadily face our giants and take them down one by one, God's hand will be upon us and our lives will be built on solid rock. Starting today, let's open our hearts to hear God's word and nourish our spirits little by little.

Let's pray.

Translated by Naomi Vogt