

Bible Reading Schedule The Golden Thread

May 15 – 1 Samuel 16: 1 – 13

Chapter 16 ultimately ties into what we've been looking out for the past few days, except this time we look through the positive lens of David's life rather than the negative lens of Saul's life. When Saul was chosen to be king, the Bible points out that Saul was an exquisite example of humanity.

1 Samuel 10:23-24 *They ran and brought him out, and as he stood among the people he was a head taller than any of the others. ²⁴ Samuel said to all the people, "Do you see the man the LORD has chosen? There is no one like him among all the people." Then the people shouted, "Long live the king!"*

Saul looked good on the outside, but as we have seen he wasn't so great on the inside. Now Samuel is looking for Israel's next king at the home of Jesse. One after another, David's brothers come out, and, no matter how good they look on the outside, God rejects each of them to be Israel's next king. Instead, God chooses the youngest brother, the weakest brother, to be Israel's next king. Look what God tells Samuel in verse 7, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.

As we have already seen, David had a heart for the Lord, and he is a picture of what is to come in Jesus. In speaking about Jesus, 800 years before Jesus was born the prophet Isaiah says this:

Isaiah 53:2-3 *He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. ³ He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*

Even today, many want to hide their face from Jesus. Many are ashamed of him, many reject him, because they cannot see the beauty and the truth of who Jesus is and what Jesus has done. It is because men are blinded to the truth. Men are still looking at the outward appearance.

Hebrews 2:6-11 *But there is a place where someone has testified: "What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? ⁷ You made him a little lower than the angels; you crowned him with glory and honor ⁸ and put everything under his feet." In putting everything under him, God left nothing that is not subject to him. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him. ⁹ But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. ¹⁰ In bringing many*

sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering. ¹¹ Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers.

May 16 – 1 Samuel 17

Today's reading is probably one of the best known stories in the entire Bible—the story of David and Goliath. As you well know, it is the story of the boy, who would one day be king, stepping up when no one else would and doing what no one else would do, because he was confident that God would work through him to accomplish His purpose. David was looked down on by everybody; his own brothers (verse 28), King Saul (verse 33), and Goliath (verse 42), but in spite of that David was confident in the Lord, because David knew that God had been preparing him for this moment. Look at verses 34-37. David knew that in the past God had been there in the midst of conflicts, and based on that David was sure that God would be with him again.

But David's confidence was also rooted in the fact that David knew that he was in the right in this conflict. The Philistine had defied the armies of the Living God, and mocked God. David knew that God would not be mocked.

Galatians 6:7-9 *Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. ⁸ The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. ⁹ Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.*

Even though it seemed to everyone that David was on a fool's mission, David was confident of success. You may recall that the soldiers, Chief Priests, and King Herod all mocked Jesus. It seemed to them that Jesus was on a fool's mission. But Jesus went to the cross confident that God would deliver him, vindicate him, and ultimately glorify him, because he was willing to fight our giant enemies of Satan, sin and death. Just as Goliath seemed insurmountable to the Israelites, those three enemies seem insurmountable to us. Jesus not only defeated those enemies on the cross, Paul tells in Colossians 2:15 that "Jesus made a spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross."

As you read this account of David and Goliath it becomes clear that Goliath was thinking too small. He was looking at this battle as just a battle against a young boy and assumed he would easily defeat David. But look what David says to Goliath after Goliath threatens David by telling David, "I'll give your flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the fields." In response to that threat against his life David says in verses 45 – 47, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I

come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. ⁴⁶ This day the LORD will hand you over to me, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head. Today I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. ⁴⁷ All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD's, and he will give all of you into our hands." While Goliath was thinking of just a small victory against David, David was thinking of a great victory against not just Goliath, but the whole army of the Philistines.

The rulers of Jesus' day were just thinking small. They wanted to be rid of that pest Jesus once and for all, but Jesus was thinking much bigger. Jesus knew that the battle he faced on the cross wouldn't just bring down the Jewish rulers, or the Romans, but would ultimately drive out the Prince of this world—Satan.

John 12:31-32 *Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. ³² But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself."*

David's confidence in God made him willing to take on Goliath and that brought a day of great deliverance for Israel. Jesus' was confident that God would not abandon him to the grave and that made him willing to take on the cross, which brings us a great day of deliverance from Satan, sin and death. David and Jesus both lived by faith not by sight.

2 Corinthians 5:5-7 *Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. ⁶ Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. ⁷ We live by faith, not by sight.*

Through Christ may we too have that same confidence so that we also can walk by faith and not by sight.

May 17 – 1 Samuel 20

What Jonathan does in this passage is an extraordinary thing—he puts himself between his own father and David, and he takes David's side. Taking David's side would cost Jonathan everything. As you can see in this passage, because Jonathan is taking David's side, it puts Jonathan in direct opposition to his father. In fact, as you read verse 30, it is almost as if Saul is saying that Jonathan is only the son of his mother and not the son of Saul. Saul literally disowns Jonathan with that statement. But even more than that, by making a covenant with David, Jonathan was ensuring that he would never take the throne of Israel. Look what his father, Saul, tells him in verse 31: "As long as the son of Jesse (David) lives on this earth, neither you nor your kingdom will be

established.” By befriending David, Jonathan incurred the wrath of his father, and gave up his right to the throne.

Doesn't what Jonathan did for David remind us in some small way of what Christ has done for us? The analogy does fall short because Jonathan's father, King Saul, and God have very little in common. Saul had no good reason to want to end David's life, but God has every reason to end ours. David had done nothing wrong to offend Saul (verse 32); we have done everything possible to offend God. But aside from this, consider what Jonathan did for David and how it points us to what Christ has done for us. In a very real sense, by coming to David's defense, Jonathan gave up his own place in the palace. David has already been anointed to be the next King of Israel. As Saul said in verse 31, as long as David lives, Jonathan will never be king. Jonathan sacrificed his position of power, so that his friend could be raised up. Now think about what Jesus has done for us. Paul tells us in Philippians 2 that Jesus gave up his place for us.

Philippians 2:6-8 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, ⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross!

And because of Christ's willingness to lay down his own life, Paul tells us in Ephesians that we are also raised up in Christ.

Ephesians 2:6 And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus

Just as Jesus stood in our place at the cross and took the Father's wrath for our sin, Jonathan stood in David's place and took his father's wrath (verse 33). Jonathan is a great example of the value of loyal friendship, but his example ultimately points to Christ.

Proverbs 18:24 A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

That friend is Jesus.

May 18 – 1 Samuel 23: 7 – 29

As you read this account of Saul chasing after David to try to kill him, do you wonder why God made things so hard for David? God had already anointed David to be king; why didn't God just get rid of Saul right away and give David an easier path to the throne? No one knows the mind of God, but as we read the Psalms, it becomes clear that David's struggle to get away from Saul drove him closer to God. Psalm 18 was written by David after God had delivered him from Saul's hand.

Psalm 18:1-6 *Of David the servant of the LORD. He sang to the LORD the words of this song when the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul. He said: I love you, O LORD, my strength.*
² *The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.* ³ *I call to the LORD, who is worthy of praise, and I am saved from my enemies.* ⁴ *The cords of death entangled me; the torrents of destruction overwhelmed me.* ⁵ *The cords of the grave coiled around me; the snares of death confronted me.* ⁶ *In my distress I called to the LORD; I cried to my God for help. From his temple he heard my voice; my cry came before him, into his ears.*

Through David's struggles, David was drawn to trust God in a powerful way that prepared him to be the king that God wanted him to be. In a similar way, God the Father, used suffering in Jesus' life to prepare him.

Hebrews 5:7-9 *During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.* ⁸ *Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered* ⁹ *and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him*

What does the writer of Hebrews mean by those words? When someone needs to learn obedience we usually assume that they have been disobedient, but that is not at all what the writer of Hebrews is talking about in these verses. We must interpret these verses in light of everything else the Bible teaches us. We know Jesus was without sin, so therefore he never could have been disobedient.

Hebrews 4:15 *For we do not have a high priest [Jesus} who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are-- yet was without sin.*

Just as David learned to trust God more and more, Jesus did also. Jesus never sinned, and was never disobedient, but everything that happened in his life was preparing him for the ultimate test of obedience—the cross. Christ's suffering increased throughout his entire life, but as that suffering increased, so did the depths of his obedience. God uses suffering in our lives in the same way. As we struggle and suffer, we are forced to trust God in deeper and deeper ways, and as our trust increases so does our willingness to obey and take God at his word.

May 19 – 1 Samuel 24

Think of what must have gone through David's mind as he had the opportunity to end Saul's life. It would have made his life so easy to just take matters into his own hands and be done with Saul once and for all. But David knew that it was not his place to execute judgment on King

Saul. King Saul had been anointed by God to be Israel's king, and (as David correctly realized) since God had made Saul king, it was up to God to also remove Saul as king. David was secure in the promise God had made to him, and he knew that when the time was right, God would act. It wasn't David's place to condemn King Saul; that belonged to God alone. Think about the self-restraint that David showed here. How easy it would have been to kill his tormentor! After all, Saul was ready to kill David. In that moment in the cave, David had the power to act; he had the power to condemn Saul and put Saul to death for his wrongful treatment of David, but David refused to act, because Saul had been set in place by God.

As you think about this, let us turn our attention to Jesus. From the moment Jesus was born, men were trying to kill him, yet, what does Jesus say in John 3:17?

John 3:17 *For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.*

Thinking of everything Jesus went through, if you had been Jesus, wouldn't you have been ready to condemn the world? If you had been Jesus, wouldn't you have been ready to call down legions of angels to come to your defense and annihilate those who were mistreating you?

Matthew 26:50-54 *Jesus replied, "Friend, do what you came for." Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him. ⁵¹ With that, one of Jesus' companions reached for his sword, drew it out and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear. ⁵² "Put your sword back in its place," Jesus said to him, "for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. ⁵³ Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? ⁵⁴ But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?"*

As much as he may have been tempted to do exactly that, Jesus knew that it was not the Father's plan to save him from the cross. Rather than condemning those who persecuted him, Jesus died for them, and asked the Father to forgive them "for they knew not what they were doing.

Romans 12:19-21 *Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. ²⁰ On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

May 20 – 2 Samuel 6: 1 – 11

Saul and Jonathan have been killed by the Philistines (1 Samuel 31), and David has been made king over all of Israel. After subduing the Philistines (2 Samuel 5), David has a good and proper desire to see the Ark of the Covenant brought to Jerusalem and put back in a proper

place of worship. Ever since the days of Samuel, the Ark had a nomadic existence. You may recall the Ark was lost by Hophni and Phinehas, the two wicked sons of Eli, when they took it with them into battle against the Philistines. It remained in the possession of the Philistines for a brief period of time, but it brought so much trouble to their land that the leaders of the Philistines put the Ark on an ox cart and sent it back to Israel. For over 40 years the Ark had been kept at a house in the countryside of Israel owned by a man named Abinadab. Now David goes with a large contingent of men to bring the Ark into Jerusalem, the new capital city of Israel. But David does not follow the instruction found in the Book of Exodus concerning how the Ark was to be transported. Rather than having the Levites carry it on poles, David has the Ark placed on an ox drawn cart. Unfortunately, during the journey to Jerusalem, the cart hit a rut in the road, which caused the Ark to start falling from the cart. Poor Uzzah only did what any of us would have done. Without thinking, he reached his hand to steady the Ark and keep it from falling in the mud, but he was instantly struck down by God. Why did God kill a man who was only trying to protect the Ark? Because God had warned the Israelites that human hands were never to touch the ark. Doing so would defile the Ark, because human touch would profane the Most Holy.

We often forget the difference between God and us. We forget how holy God is and how unholy we are. Stories like this remind us of the difference between ourselves and God, and therefore, we can't just approach God however we feel like it. We can't come into his presence without first being made holy. That is why we so desperately need Jesus. Jesus is the one who cleanses and makes us holy.

Ephesians 5:25-27 *Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ²⁶ to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, ²⁷ and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.*

And allows us to come and stand in the presence of God.

Jude 1:24-25 *To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy-- ²⁵ to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.*

Without the cleansing power of Jesus' blood every time we reached out to God we would be struck dead just like Uzzah. But because of Christ we are instead welcomed into God's glorious presence.

May 21 – 2 Samuel 6: 12 – 22

After the first failed attempt to bring the Ark into Jerusalem, David is understandably afraid of the Ark and the power of God that lives in the Ark. He asks a very interesting question in 2 Samuel 6: 9: “How can the Ark of the Lord ever come to me?” David desperately wants the Ark close by him, because he knows it represents that the Lord is close by him. David tried in his own wisdom to get the Ark to come to him, and he failed. Now David tries once again, but this time he goes by the book. This time David has the Levites carry the Ark, and he also stops the procession and offers a sacrifice to the Lord.

The only way we can approach the Lord is to come by the way he prescribes. The Psalmist says this about entering the presence of the Lord:

Psalm 24:3-4 *Who may ascend the hill of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place? ⁴ He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false.*

Jesus is the only person who ever had those qualities. Only Jesus is worthy to ascend the hill and stand in the holy place. And that is exactly what Jesus did for us. He ascended a hill called Golgatha (Mount Calvary) and stood in our place. Because of his righteousness, he was worthy to climb the hill, and then on the cross he took our sins, so that through his sacrifice our sins are not just forgiven, but his righteousness becomes our righteousness. Because of Christ’s sacrifice we have his clean hands and his pure heart, and we are now able to ascend the hill of the Lord and stand in His presence.

Jesus said: **John 14:6** *“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”*

As David realized that the Ark could come to him, he became filled with more and more joy, and he danced his way into Jerusalem. He was so filled with joy that he made a fool out of himself, at least in the eyes of his wife Michal. Do you know that kind of joy in your own heart? Are you dancing mightily before the Lord? Stop and think about what Christ has done so that you can come into the presence of God. If that doesn’t at least make our hearts dance with joy, then we are missing something. We are either failing to comprehend the sacrifice that makes it possible for us to come into the presence of the Lord, or we are failing to comprehend what it means to be able to stand in the presence of the Lord.