

“Recognizing Winds of Change” 1 Samuel 17:1-30
Wednesday 10/16/19 – Jeff Lyle

Never forget that God has a plan. We also need to remember that He is constantly working to bring that plan to fulfillment. God was done with Saul as the King of Israel, and He had already chosen Saul's replacement. David was presently anointed and awaiting his future elevation to the throne of Israel. Before that occurred, there was a process that God had initiated that must first be completed. David's slaying of Goliath was a huge piece of that process. What does it look like when the winds of God's providence begin to blow? When it is time for things to move within God's wise plans, His people need to exercise sharp discernment to recognize what He is accomplishing. In a very discouraging situation, God would providentially move to bring about one of the most glorious events in the young life of the boy who would become a king. David would be slaying a giant. Looking back now, we can clearly recognize the winds of change which were being unleashed in Israel by God.

I. Days of War in Israel (1-3)

A. A persistent enemy in place (1) - “Now the Philistines gathered together their armies to battle...” **Here they come again!**

The Philistines were like a maddening, itchy rash that Israel simply could not get rid of. Going back to the original invasion of Canaan under the leadership of Joshua, Israel had been fighting the Philistine armies. During the days of the Judges, these people had continued to war with Israel. King Saul had not been successful in wiping them out either. As chapter 17 opens, the Philistines were in a place of advantage over Israel and preparing to fight them yet again. Same song, new verse: the armies of Israel were unable to avoid yet another conflict with the Philistines.

B. A powerless leader in place (2) - “And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered, and encamped in the Valley of Elah, and drew up in line of battle against the Philistines.”

Sadly, Saul had lost the power of God off of his life through his disobedience. Frequently tormented by an evil spirit, the king of Israel was not in a position to fight his enemies with inner assurance that God would provide the victory. Saul had become a man who held position over man but no longer had power from God.

C. A prolonged standoff in place (3) - “And the Philistines stood on the mountain on the one side, and Israel stood on the mountain on the other side, with a valley between them.”

This was an old-fashioned standoff. **Verse 16** informs us that this stare-down from the Philistines lasted forty straight days. Neither army seemed eager to be the first to go hard against the other. There was a valley between the two armies and, very soon, the Philistines would make the first proactive move to incite the battle. Saul seemed content to allow Israel sit idly by and avoid the fight in indecision. That is often the case with leaders who no longer have confidence that God is with them. They let the enemy determine the parameters of warfare.

II. Days of Worry for Saul (4-11)

A. Intimidating obstacles (4-7) - And there came out from the camp of the Philistines a champion named Goliath of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span. 5 He had a helmet of bronze on his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail, and the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of bronze. 6 And he had bronze armor on his legs, and a javelin of bronze slung between his shoulders. 7 The shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron. And his shield-bearer went before him."

There was a custom in ancient warfare that each opposing army would send out their best warrior. Rather than a needless massacre to determine the winner, there could be a representative battle. Whichever army's representative soldier won, to his army the victory would belong. Goliath was a terribly intimidating presence being sent out as the Philistines' representative. He stood over 9 feet tall, covered with armor weighing over 125 pounds, carrying a spear whose tip weighed 15 pounds, and was shielded by another soldier out in front of him. Israel needed to send forth a representative of their own to meet the giant in the valley.

B. Unavoidable decisions (8-9) - "He stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, "Why have you come out to draw up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not servants of Saul? Choose a man for yourselves, and let him come down to me. 9 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."

Goliath and the Philistines were backing Saul and Israel into a corner. Now, there could be no more avoiding the battle. It was now getting real: the Philistines demanded a fight with no further delay. The line in the sand had been officially drawn.

C. Faithless response (10-11) - "And the Philistine said, "I defy the ranks of Israel this day. Give me a man, that we may fight together." 11 When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid."

Defeat was in the air and swirling rapidly around the mind of Saul. He had forgotten that Israel was the chosen nation of God and that their enemies were cursed pagans. God would fight for Israel if they would trust Him. Yet, Saul had no faith. His fearful example as the leader infected the entire army of Israel. Among all of those soldiers, not a single one possessed enough faith in God to step out to meet Goliath's challenge. Goliath defied God and His people, and Saul and Israel responded in fear instead of faith.

III. Days of Waiting for David (12-20a)

A. David and his duties (12-15) - "Now David was the son of an Ephrathite of Bethlehem in Judah, named Jesse, who had eight sons. In the days of Saul the man was already old and advanced in years. 13 The three oldest sons of Jesse had followed Saul to the battle. And the names of his three sons who went to the battle were Eliab the firstborn, and next to him Abinadab, and the third Shammah. 14 David was the youngest. The three eldest followed Saul, 15 but David went back and forth from Saul to feed his father's sheep at Bethlehem."

In these verses, the scene shifts from the intensity of Saul's war to monotony of David's work. While the winds of change were blowing from God into Israel, David was still back at home enduring the boring daily tasks of leading the sheep. With his brothers serving in Israel's army, David was needed back from the palace to the sheepfold for mundane work on the family ranch. David had to leave his service in the king's palace and return to the dirty work of shepherding.

B. David and his dispatch (16-18) - "Take for your brothers...parched grain...these ten loaves, and carry them quickly to the camp to your brother. Also take these ten cheeses to the commander of their thousand."

From the ministry of court musician and armor-bearer to King Saul, David became the ancient equivalent of an Uber Eats delivery guy. Saddling up a donkey with necessary food rations, David headed out to the scene of the standoff with the Philistines. Read those verses again: the anointed future king of Israel was given the lowly assignment of delivering cheese to frightened soldiers. One of the tests of our fitness for leadership is how we respond when we are stuck in the duties of servants. In the prophetic words of Isaiah 52 & 53, the very Messiah, Jesus Christ, is referred to as God's servant. Jesus would say

during His earthly ministry that He came to serve others, not be served Himself. If God has anointed us to be leaders in the Kingdom, we do well to remember that we are always to bring our servant's garments along with us.

C. David and his diligence (19-20a) - “David rose early in the morning {motivation}, and left the sheep with a keeper and took the provisions {preparation} and went as Jesse had commanded him {dedication}...”

I love watching David *be David*. He treated this next assignment with the same level of excellence that he approached all of his other duties. David did not drag his feet but honored his father by rising early the following day, preparing for the care of his sheep in his absence and did exactly as his father had instructed. In the Kingdom, we must always operate in excellence as pertains to our motivation, preparation and dedication. David did this instinctively. He was anointed, but he still retained the commitment to serve wholeheartedly, giving his best in all things as a faithful steward of each opportunity. This is part of why God would entrust David with much more significant assignments later. If a teenager will deliver cheese with all of his heart, he will likely rule a nation in the same manner.

IV. Days of Wonder from David (20b-30)

A. Amazing unbelief (20b-24) - “20b And he came to the encampment as the host was going out to the battle line, shouting the war cry. 21 And Israel and the Philistines drew up for battle, army against army. 22 And David left the things in charge of the keeper of the baggage and ran to the ranks and went and greeted his brothers. 23 As he talked with them, behold, the champion, the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name, came up out of the ranks of the Philistines and spoke the same words as before. And David heard him. 24 All the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him and were much afraid.”

As David appeared on the scene of the standoff between Israel and the Philistines, he would have wondered at what his eyes were beholding. The armies were drawn up in fairly typical battle formation. Then, thundering from the valley came the voice of a giant. Goliath was blaspheming the God of Israel. He continued to mock the armies of Israel. His taunts and insults had been carrying on for weeks, but this time **David's ears were taking in all that was being spewed forth**. Then, shockingly, the courageous young David watched the soldiers in God's army turn tail and run away from the gargantuan pagan in the valley. Unbelief was everywhere and David's heart must have sunk quickly at what he saw and heard.

B. Amazing carnality (25) - "And the men of Israel said, “Have you seen this man who has come up? Surely he has come up to defy Israel. And 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.”

Soon, David learned that Saul had authorized quite a jackpot for any soldier who might muster up the courage to go out and fight Goliath. As David began to enquire why nothing was being done to silence Goliath, the faithless soldiers tried to reason with David that there was nobody who could defeat the Philistine giant. So pitiful was the situation that Saul was now offering a worldly, fleshly motivation and reward was offered for a completely righteous cause. The man who would defeat Goliath would gain the privilege of marrying the king's daughter and becoming part of the royal family. Additionally, the soldier's blood family would be set completely free from any kingdom taxes. Basically, Saul had crafted a financial signing bonus for someone to go out and silence the enemy.

C. Amazing faith (26-30) - “David said to the men who stood by him, “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 of the living God?” 27 And the people answered him in the same way, “So shall it be done to the man who kills him.” 28 Now Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spoke to the men. And Eliab's anger was kindled 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 presumption and the evil of your heart, for you have come down to see the battle.” 29 And David said, “What have I done now? Was it not but a word?” 30 And he turned away from him toward another, and spoke in the same way, and the people answered him again as before.”

A strange, often unpleasant thing sometimes occurs when someone with faith shows up on a scene where nobody else has faith. Rather than rejoicing that God had provided David and a willingness to fight the giant, David's own big brother railed against him. David's motivations were questioned by Eliab after David wondered why nobody was going down there in the valley to kill this enemy of God. David was calling out everyone in utter astonishment that this Philistine had been allowed to mock god and His army. Eliab sneeringly told David to get back to the family farm and round up *his little sheepies* that he was supposed to be watching. In other words, Eliab was letting David know that he was way out of his league when speaking to military matters. David responded with further amazement. He demanded to know exactly why Eliab thought he was speaking and acting inappropriately. Was there not a legitimate reason for David speaking up? Was there not a serious cause for somebody to speak into? David would not let the faithless voices drown out his own voice. Here is how David's words can be summed up:

1. David's faith revealed (26) - "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?"

2. David's faith resisted (27-28) - "Now Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spoke to the men. And Eliab's anger was kindled 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 presumption and the evil of your heart, for you have come down to see the battle."

3. David's faith reinforced (29-30) - "And David said, "What have I done now? Was it not but a word?"

The winds of change were being released by God into Israel. Unbelief was being blown out and holy faith was being blown in. Very soon, the faith-filled shepherd boy would step down into the valley and wrestle the conversation away from Goliath. David had some things to say that nobody else was willing to speak. David also had a heart pulsing with valor. Goliath did not know it but, very soon, he would release the very last of his earthly allotment of words.