

October 4, 2015

Heroes of Faith

"After this, God gave them judges until the time of Samuel, the prophet. Then the people asked for a king, and he gave them Saul, son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin, who ruled forty years. After removing Saul, he made David their king. He testified concerning him, "I have found David, son of Jesse, a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do"
Acts 13:20-22

"But the Lord said to Samuel, "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...Then the Lord said, "Rise and anoint him; he is the one. Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the Lord came upon David in power..."
I Samuel 16:7-13



Many of us grew up with the story of David and Goliath. David, as a young man, went up against the Philistine giant, in one-on-one combat and killed the giant with a stone fired from his sling shot. Of all of the things that David accomplished in his life time, this is the one that stands out in the minds of many, but this event is not what makes David a hero for God.

David's story actually begins some time before this epic battle. The people of Israel had demanded that Samuel, the last of the judges, anoint a king for them so that they could be like everyone else. God's response to their demands is really heartbreaking. He told Samuel, *"Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you that they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king..."* (I Samuel 8:7)

God's first choice for king of his people was a man named Saul who was from the tribe of Benjamin. Like many of God's leaders, Saul was not very excited to become king, but he did become the first king of Israel. As king, he initially did well leading the people against their enemies and following God's direction. But his new found power quickly corrupted him and he began ignoring God's direction.

After forty years as king, Saul fell in battle to the Philistines, and David, who had already been anointed by Samuel and victorious against Goliath, eventually became the second King of Israel. Unlike Saul, David was a man after God's own heart, but not a perfect man. While David followed God carefully and with all of his heart, he also committed adultery with another man's wife and then had that man killed in an effort to cover-up his sin.

Under David's leadership Israel expanded its borders to include all the God had promised Abraham to give his descendants. David consolidated Israel's power making it one of the greatest nations in the world of that day. All of the promises that God had made to Abraham were finally fulfilled in David, except the promise of a great blessing to the entire world and even that promise was fulfilled in Jesus Christ, David's descendant.

There are many lessons that we can glean from the life of David. In him we see someone who was devoted to God and shared a close personal relationship with him. As the author of many of the psalms, including Psalm 23, we see in David a man who despite his own imperfections followed God closely.

David also demonstrates many negative characteristics that all of us struggle to overcome. He fell to temptation, he lied to cover up his sin, he murdered, he was embroiled in ugly political intrigue and on many levels he failed as a father and as a king.

David also demonstrates a key characteristic that all of us, I think, should try to mimic. Whatever David did, whenever he failed to be what God wanted him to be; David always returned to God. If we learned no other lesson from David's life we need to learn this one, I think. Whatever we do wrong, wherever we fail God, what will make us a real hero is our return to the Father. David's life shows us that victory in the Lord does not go to the perfect, but to those who always return to the Father.