



Sunday, February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2026

## Giant Killer

### Victim or Victor?

The stories of people in the Old Testament were recorded as examples for us today. God's Word plainly reveals both the good and the bad about such highly regarded individuals as Moses, Abraham, and Elijah. We're not only told how the Lord was able to move mightily in their lives, but also how and why they failed. The purpose of these stories is to benefit you and me today.

Many people believe that the only way you can really learn something is through hard knocks. They think you have to experience your own hardships, situations, and circumstances. However, God wrote all of these things down in His Word so you and I wouldn't have to learn that way. Instead, we can learn through the experience of Bible characters—their successes and mistakes.

David's life is full of lessons for us today. I want to explore with you, the differences between David, Saul, and David's 3<sup>rd</sup> son, Absalom. We'll see the importance of David's heart attitude and relationship with God. We'll also reflect on the processes that led to his downfall and restoration.

It doesn't matter if you're succeeding in your calling, just starting out, or if you've failed miserably. David's life will encourage and inspire you to avoid temptation, trust God (even after you've fallen), and keep your heart sensitive to Him. The giants in your life won't stand a chance as these Lessons from David become your very own!

The early part of David's life was closely woven together with Saul's. Therefore, we can't really look into the life of David without first understanding some things about Saul.

#### 1 Samuel 9:2:

**<sup>2</sup>And he had a choice and handsome son whose name was Saul. There was not a more handsome person than he among the children of Israel. From his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people.**

The tallest man in Israel only came up to Saul's shoulders. So for an Israelite, Saul was like a giant. However, he was also a very humble man. He started off being very little in his own eyes, so the Lord chose him as king over the nation of Israel.

## **1 Samuel 15:17**

**<sup>17</sup> So Samuel said, “When you *were* little in your own eyes, *were* you not head of the tribes of Israel? And did not the Lord anoint you king over Israel?”**

The people rallied to Saul, and he was established as king. Saul sought the Lord during the first two or three years of his reign as king. God brought major deliverances through Saul and solidified the kingdom under him.

In 1 Samuel 13, Saul assembled the troops in preparation for battle against the Philistines. Samuel the prophet instructed Saul to wait seven days until he came to offer a sacrifice. Then after Samuel offered the sacrifice, the army of Israel would go into battle with God’s blessing.

## **1 Samuel 13:8-10**

**<sup>8</sup> Then he waited seven days, according to the time set by Samuel. But Samuel did not come to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him. <sup>9</sup> So Saul said, “Bring a burnt offering and peace offerings here to me.” And he offered the burnt offering. <sup>10</sup> Now it happened, as soon as he had finished presenting the burnt offering, that Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him, that he might greet him.**

Saul offered this sacrifice contrary to the instructions of God. The law prescribed that only priests could offer these sacrifices and petition the Lord like this. Saul stepped out of his position as king and attempted to assume the position of priest. He was a secular government official, not a priest. However, even a priest was required to offer sacrifices correctly according to God’s instructions.

The Old Testament law was very strict in regard to these things. Even if you were a priest, you had to perform your priestly duties exactly the right way. Not only did Saul not know how to properly offer the sacrifice, but he was not even a priest. Obviously, he committed a major sin in God’s eyes.

As soon as Saul finished offering the sacrifice, Samuel showed up.

## **1 Samuel 13:11-12**

**<sup>11</sup> And Samuel said, “What have you done?”**

**Saul said, “When I saw that the people were scattered from me, and *that* you did not come within the days appointed, and *that* the Philistines gathered together at Michmash, <sup>12</sup> then I said, ‘The Philistines will now come down on me at Gilgal, and I have not made supplication to the Lord.’ Therefore I felt compelled, and offered a burnt offering.”**

Samuel reproved Saul for what he did and asked, “Why did you do it?” Instead of humbling himself and saying, “I was wrong. Please forgive me,” Saul immediately began to justify himself and make excuses by saying, “The people were beginning to leave me.”

Saul was a people pleaser. He was insecure and dependent on the approval of others. However, he tried to spiritualize it by saying, “I had to offer this sacrifice. I just couldn’t go into battle without offering my sacrifice!” That may have been the custom and to some degree it may have been valid, but Saul was just using this as an excuse. Saul was not seeking God with all his heart. We know this to be true, based on the Lord’s reaction.

If this had just been a mistake—a miscalculation—God would not have responded to Saul the way He did. The Lord knew Saul’s heart:

### **1 Samuel 16:7**

**7 But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For *the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.*”**

God became very upset with him, and brought a severe punishment upon him. This shows that Saul knew exactly what he was doing. Yet, here he was, trying to explain himself away. This is a common practice. Instead of just admitting, “I blew it. Please forgive me,” most people try to excuse themselves and shift the blame.

David, however, never blamed anyone else for his failures. He always took responsibility and admitted, “Lord, it’s my fault.” When David numbered the people, God became very angry. After 70,000 Israelites died, the angel executing this judgment was about to enter Jerusalem. David fell on his face before the Lord and cried out:

### **2 Samuel 24:17**

**17 Then David spoke to the Lord when he saw the angel who was striking the people, and said, “Surely I have sinned, and I have done wickedly; but these sheep, what have they done? Let Your hand, I pray, be against me and against my father’s house.”**

David didn’t try to place the blame on others like Saul did by saying, “It’s their fault. They made me do it!” No, he took responsibility and shouldered the blame himself. This is one of the character traits that made David a man after God’s own heart.

David made some serious mistakes. **When the Bible talks** about having a pure *heart*—a perfect heart—it doesn’t mean that you never sin. It’s talking about how you *respond* when you do sin. When you make a mistake, do you blame other people? Are you someone who refuses to accept the truth that it’s your fault that you’re in a mess? Do you always blame things on the past, your dysfunctional family, your circumstances or other factors? **Are you a victim or a victor?**

This victim mentality or attitude is very popular in our society. It's an attempt to dodge responsibility and blame others. This was Saul's attitude. People with this attitude won't survive, be blessed, or reach their full potential. If you want to be a person after God's own heart, take a lesson from David and **start accepting responsibility when you're wrong. Stop making excuses and blaming others! Be a victor, not a victim!**

I pray that the Holy Spirit will quicken this truth to you and help you apply it to your situation. If you're still blaming everything and everyone else, you need to accept responsibility. Why is this so important? Because **you have to accept responsibility in order to be in *control* and *change* things.**

But why do I have to accept responsibility? Because, **if other people and circumstances have made you the mess that you are, then you can never *change*.** There are many things you cannot change. You cannot change the family you were born into, the color of your skin, where you grew up, other people, or a load of other outside factors. There are many circumstances and aspects of your environment that you have absolutely no control over. However, if you will accept responsibility and say, "Regardless of what's been done to me, it's the way I have responded to it that has made me the way I am. It's my fault. Lord, I repent and I thank you for forgiving me," then you can change. You are the only one you can change. In order to stop being a victim and start being a victor, you must accept responsibility for your own messes.

### **1 Samuel 13:13**

<sup>13</sup> **And Samuel said to Saul, "You have done foolishly.**

Saul had disobeyed God. He tried to rationalize and explain away what he did by saying, "The people made me do it. I had to offer this sacrifice because I didn't want to go to war without asking God's favor." Saul had a million excuses.

You can try to make it look good but if you disobey God, you're foolish. It doesn't matter what you say, how you justify it, or what the extenuating circumstances are, disobedience to God is wrong! There is no such thing as "situational ethics." There is right and wrong. You need to quit blaming somebody else and accept the fact that if you disobey God, you're foolish.

### **1 Samuel 13:13**

<sup>13</sup> **And Samuel said to Saul, "You have done foolishly. You have not kept the commandment of the Lord your God, which He commanded you. For now the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever.**

This statement conflicts with many people's theology. Many people think that since God knows the end from the beginning, He also controls everything that happens in between. Since God is all-knowing and all-powerful, they believe that only what He wills comes to pass on the earth. That kind of belief makes the Lord responsible for all the evil in the world. After all, it couldn't happen unless He "willed" or "allowed" it. This kind of false teaching is popularly called, "the sovereignty of God."

If we applied these faulty assumptions to Saul, people would say, "God knew exactly who Saul was and what he would do. He knew that Saul was going to fail. Therefore, Saul was just a temporary pick in God's true plan. All along, the Lord planned for Saul to fail so He could raise David up. This was God's sovereign plan."

God, speaking through the prophet Samuel, clearly refutes this assumption in His words to Saul found in 1 Samuel 13:13: "If you would have obeyed Me and not done your own thing, and trusted Me and waited just one more hour until Samuel showed up, I would have established your kingdom upon Israel forever". This means that David was not God's first choice.

The Lord didn't choose Saul as a mere interim, temporary king over Israel, until the real person He wanted—David—could come of age and take over. No! God's Word plainly reveals that His first choice was Saul. If Saul had cooperated with the Lord, He would have established his kingdom over the nation of Israel forever. This means we would have never even heard of David.

This is a little hard for people who really know the Bible to comprehend. Why? Because David is everywhere throughout God's Word. He was blessed. As a matter of fact, the southern kingdom of the nation of Israel was preserved and lasted longer than the northern ten tribes because the Lord was honoring David. He spared his descendants because of David.

Today we speak of the "sure mercies of David." God made an oath and a covenant that He would establish the throne of David's kingdom forever. This was ultimately fulfilled through The Messiah, Jesus Christ, who was called "the Son of David." Prophecies spoke of the Messiah coming out of the tribe of Judah, David's tribe.

But 1 Samuel 13:13 makes it very clear that David wasn't God's first choice. If Saul had obeyed the Lord, we would be talking about the "sure mercies of Saul" today. The Messiah would have come out of the tribe of Benjamin, Saul's tribe. We never would have heard of David. There would never have been a Solomon. There might have been others who did equal or even greater things, but David wasn't God's original plan.

One of the most important lessons we can learn from the life of David is that God chose David as a result of Saul's disobedience.

## 1 Samuel 13:13-14

**For now the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. <sup>14</sup>But now your kingdom shall not continue. The Lord has sought for Himself a man after His own heart, and the Lord has commanded him *to be* commander over His people, because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you.”**

The Lord sought out David after Saul rejected Him. This instance took place in the second year of Saul’s reign (1 Samuel 13:1). At the end of Saul’s forty-year reign (Acts 13:21), David became king when he was thirty years old (2 Samuel 5:4). This meant that David wasn’t even born when Saul rejected God and received notice of God’s judgment through the prophet Samuel. David was born eight years later. David wasn’t God’s first choice—Saul was!

Just because you have stumbled upon God’s will for your life and have begun to fulfill it, that doesn’t mean you’ll automatically finish the course. Just because you can see His calling, anointing, and blessing on your life, do not think you can’t hinder it. That isn’t God’s plan for you, but you can hinder God’s plan.

As far as **God** is concerned, He’s **willing** and **planning** for you to **prosper**.

## Jeremiah 29:11

**<sup>11</sup> For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.**

**The KJV ends this verse: “to give you an expected end.”**

God has a **good** plan for every individual. It’s a plan that will give you an “expected end”—a predicted **future** of **success**. The Lord has a plan and purpose for everyone. He desires for every person to fulfill his individual destiny, but this doesn’t automatically or sovereignly come to pass. You can hinder God’s plan for your life, as did Saul.

The example of Saul can serve as a warning to all of us. The Lord has a plan for each one of us that is by grace—it’s not based on our performance—but we do have to cooperate with that plan. Even though we don’t deserve our God-given destiny, there are things we can do that will hinder or stop it from coming to pass in our lives.

So, take notice and be watchful! You can’t just take the grace of God, His blessing, and His calling on your life for granted. You need to persevere.

Paul understood and cooperated with this truth.

## **1 Corinthians 15:9-10**

**<sup>9</sup>For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. <sup>10</sup>But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God *which was with me.***

Paul's calling was by God's grace. He didn't deserve it.

**Paul said:**

**His grace toward me was not in vain**

In other words, God can give grace to you, but you can void it. The Lord has a plan for your life, but you can invalidate it.

**His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God *which was with me.***

Paul was saying that the Lord—by grace—chose him. Paul wasn't really seeking God at the time God chose him. He was hunting down, persecuting, and killing Christians. According to the Lord himself, **Paul was** kicking "against the goads" (Acts 9:5). Paul wasn't chosen because of any great virtue on his part. It was a grace decision. Yet Paul was saying that he could have made it vain and voided the grace of God. Thankfully he didn't, and instead he responded by faith to God's grace and "labored more abundantly."

A goad was a pointed stick used for urging on oxen, horses, and other animals. For Saul to "kick against the goads," that means that Saul was fighting against the reproof and conviction that the Lord had been giving him. This leaves no doubt that Saul had been under conviction for some time.

Sometimes those who protest the loudest are the ones who are the most convicted. Saul's severe persecution against the Christians was just a manifestation of the conflict that was going on inside him. He had been trained to adhere to the Law in the strictest sense, but there was a growing revelation inside him that Jesus had fulfilled the Law.

Just like Saul, God has a purpose and plan for each and every one of us. Even after Saul sinned in 1 Samuel 13, God didn't immediately take him out of the kingship.

Saul remained king until the day of his death. His kingdom however, instead of being a blessing, turned into a burden for the nation of Israel. Saul oppressed and took advantage of the people. He was tormented, did terrible things, and basically went crazy. He destroyed his son Jonathan's life. Saul certainly did not realize his full potential.

God's plan for your life is by grace, but you must cooperate with that grace by faith. Like Saul, you can stop God's plan and blessing from fully materializing.