

God works in the little things

Have you ever wondered why God works the way He does? Have you ever sat and thought about the way that God has worked in your life? Have you considered the little things that have happened in your life to make you the person you are, and have you ever thought that maybe God has done those things on purpose, not on accident? We are just finishing the Christmas season, which is a time where we celebrate the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. One of the most important things about the story of Christmas is the fact that Jesus was born in a lowly stable, to poor parents, and was adored by shepherds, instead of being born into the glory and majesty you might expect that would accompany the birth of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Jesus' birth proves that God delights in showing Himself strong in little ways, not in ways you or I might expect.

Oh, sure, there are stories in the Bible where God shows up and covers a mountain with smoke and fire, or when God in His might rains fire from heaven. But God would much rather work in the little things in life. If you are looking for the mighty booming voice of God before you will do what He says, let me suggest you look elsewhere. God is not found in the big and powerful, but in the small, so that if you are noticing, you will find Him. Let me give two examples.

The first example is found in the book of 1 Kings, chapter 19. Here we find a prophet of God name Elijah. He has been threatened by a wicked queen and is running for his life, seeking to make his complaint to God. The Bible says that Elijah climbed into a cave and had some very strange things happen. The Bible says that God passed by and a strong wind went by and broke rocks in pieces, "but the LORD was not in the wind." After the wind, an earthquake came, but the Bible says, "but the LORD was not in the earthquake." Scripture says then that after the earthquake there was a fire, but again, the Bible says, "the LORD was not in the fire." Then the Bible says that after the fire, there was "a still small voice."

It was in that small silent voice that God then spoke to his prophet, and gave him news that would change his life and the course of the country forever, as well as rid Elijah of that wicked queen. The Bible does not say what Elijah's expectations were, but God sent huge, powerful signs to Elijah, but was not in any of them. God came in a small voice to speak to Elijah. God delights to reveal Himself in different ways, and He makes Himself look strong when He can do mighty things with very little. Think about it. For you who love to bake, isn't it true that you are more impressed with a recipe made from scratch than a mix out of a box? When you have less to work with, the finished product makes the creator seem more impressive. God delights in using the little things to make Himself look big.

But I would like to look at another example this morning. If you have a Bible, please turn in it to 1 Samuel chapter 17. This may be a familiar story to many of you, but I would like to look at it as example of how God works to make Himself look strong through small things. Verses 1-3 say this: "Now the Philistines gathered together their armies to battle, and were gathered together at Shochoh, which belongeth to Judah, and pitched between Shochoh and Azekah, in Ephesdammim. And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered together, and pitched by the valley of Elah, and set the battle in array against the Philistines. And the Philistines stood on a mountain on the one side, and Israel stood on a mountain on the other side: and there was a valley between them."

Just to give you a little background, this is a story that takes place a few centuries after Israel comes into the Promised Land. They have been ruled by regional leaders for years, but now finally have a king, whose name is Saul. One of Israel's greatest enemies were a people called the Philistines. The Philistines were constantly trying to take over the land belonging to Israel. They were people who did not believe in the God of Israel.

On this occasion of battle, the Bible says this in the next few verses: "And there went out a champion out of the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath, of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span. And he had an helmet of brass upon his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail; and the weight of the coat was five thousand

shekels of brass. And he had greaves of brass upon his legs, and a target of brass between his shoulders. And the staff of his spear was like a weaver's beam; and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron: and one bearing a shield went before him. And he stood and cried unto the armies of Israel, and said unto them, "Why are ye come out to set your battle in array? Am not I a Philistine, and ye servants to Saul? Choose you a man for you, and let him come down to me. If he be able to fight with me, and to kill me, then will we be your servants: but if I prevail against him, and kill him, then shall ye be our servants, and serve us." And the Philistine said, "I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together." When Saul and all Israel heard those words of the Philistine, they were dismayed, and greatly afraid."

One of the soldiers of the Philistines was a giant of a man name Goliath, who was armed to the teeth. He wore a coat of mail that weighed 157 lbs. He had leg shields, a helmet made of brass and shoulder guards. Goliath also had a man who walked in front of him that had a large shield. Goliath was protected. But Goliath also had a large sword and a spear that the Bible says was as big as a weaver's beam and whose point weighed 17 lbs. The Bible calls this soldier a "champion" because he was skilled in warfare. Probably the most impressive thing about Goliath was his height. The Bible gives measurements which puts Goliath at over nine feet tall! The Bible says that for forty days this giant of a man came out of the Philistine army and offered the challenge of man to man combat instead of the skirmishes that had been going on. No one in Israel's army dared take Goliath up on his challenge, not even King Saul, who the Bible says was head and shoulders taller than everyone else.

The story then shifts and focuses on a little boy who had been introduced in the previous chapter. His name was David, and he was the youngest of eight boys. Verses 12-15 say: "Now David was the son of that Ephrathite of Bethlehem-judah, whose name was Jesse; and he had eight sons: and the man went among men for an old man in the days of Saul. And the three eldest sons of Jesse went and followed Saul to the battle: and the names of his three sons that went to the battle were Eliab the firstborn, and next unto him Abinadab, and the third Shammah. And David was the youngest: and the three eldest followed Saul. But David went and returned from Saul to feed his father's sheep at Bethlehem." David had been in the palace of Saul playing music for him, but now Saul is on the battlefield. David's oldest three brothers go to battle against the Philistines, but David must stay behind and watch the family's herd of sheep. He has been passed up, and is too young to fight anyone, let alone a giant like Goliath.

Then a day comes when Jesse, David's father, sends him to the battle to take some food to his brothers in the army. Verses 17-22 say: "And Jesse said unto David his son, 'Take now for thy brethren an ephah of this parched corn, and these ten loaves, and run to the camp to thy brethren; And carry these ten cheeses unto the captain of their thousand, and look how thy brethren fare, and take their pledge.' Now Saul, and they, and all the men of Israel, were in the valley of Elah, fighting with the Philistines. And David rose up early in the morning, and left the sheep with a keeper, and took, and went, as Jesse had commanded him; and he came to the trench, as the host was going forth to the fight, and shouted for the battle. For Israel and the Philistines had put the battle in array, army against army. And David left his carriage in the hand of the keeper of the carriage, and ran into the army, and came and saluted his brethren."

David goes to see his brothers, but while he is there, he hears the challenge of the armies of Israel, this Goliath. As Goliath comes out to offer his challenge, the army of Israel flees. David hears the challenge and asks, "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" David is angry that Goliath has been allowed to speak against God, and demands that something be done about it. This boldness is heard by King Saul, who summons David to see him. There he says, "Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth." Saul will not go to fight Goliath, and he also does not want David to.

Saul, like many others, looked at the facts around him and made a judgment about what God can and cannot do. We say that God is unable to do such and such, because we can clearly see what is possible. But God,

remember, uses weak things in the world to do great things. For those weak who will trust what God is doing, He has promised to make Himself appear very strong.

David explains to Saul why he feels like he is able to go to fight Goliath. He says in Verses 34-37: “Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God. The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine.” David retells two stories of when he had to protect his sheep, and in those stories, he gives credit to God for giving him the victory. He says that Goliath will be the same as these animals, since in the sight of God, giving victory over a lion is no different than giving victory over a trained soldier.

When David said this, Saul said unto David, “Go, and the LORD be with thee.” Saul offers David his armor, but David instead chooses to go to battle in the clothes in which he normally dresses. He goes to a small stream and chooses five smooth stones and puts them into the bag tied around his waist. Some commentators say that the other four were for Goliath’s brothers. We don’t really know but we do know that David went into the battlefield, armed with only five small stones.

The Bible tells us that when David left the army of Israel, the Philistine saw him and laughed. Verses 42-45 say: “And when the Philistine looked about, and saw David, he disdained him: for he was but a youth, and ruddy, and of a fair countenance. And the Philistine said unto David, ‘Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves?’ And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. And the Philistine said to David, ‘Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field.’” This giant continues his threats. He, too sees only a little boy. In his mind, he has already won this battle, since David is small and unarmed. But Goliath has underestimated the power of the God of Israel, and how God loves to make His power known. Goliath has plans to kill David and leave his body to the vultures nearby, which was a disgrace back in those times. But God had other plans.

David replied in verse 45: “Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the LORD'S, and he will give you into our hands.”

So there were the two men. One was a little boy, the other a trained warrior. One had no armor, the other a coat of mail, guards, a helmet of brass and an armorbearer. One had a spear and a sword, the other had a sling and a bag full of stones. On God’s side was a boy who was ill-equipped in every way. But God delights in working through small vessels to accomplish great things. David himself even said that his victory would show everyone that the battle is the LORD’s, and that everyone would know that there was a God in Israel. The reason that David was out on the battlefield was not youthful foolhardiness. He wanted to prove to everyone that God can do whatever He wants. God shows himself strong when He can prove Himself in ways you wouldn’t expect. There is no natural explanation for what happened next.

Verses 48-49 say: “And it came to pass, when the Philistine arose, and came and drew nigh to meet David, that David hasted, and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine. And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slang it, and smote the Philistine in his forehead, that the stone sunk into his forehead; and he fell upon his face to the earth.” David, instead of running away from the giant, ran toward him, and as he ran, he took a stone out of his pouch, put it in his sling, and killed Goliath by putting a stone in his forehead. The Bible says that the stone actually sunk into the forehead of the giant. At that, Goliath fell to the ground face-

first. His brass helmet, his coat of mail, his shoulder and shin guards were of no use to him. Goliath never got to use his spear or his sword. God had defeated the mighty giant with a little boy who had one stone and a belief that God would protect him and give him the victory.

Just in case any of the Philistines were wondering if Goliath was really dead, the Bible says in Verse 51 that David ran up to the body of the fallen champion and cut his head off, to prove to the Philistines what God had done. At that, the Bible says that the Philistines fled. They began to run away from the battle, and Israel followed them. King Saul was able to win a victory, and made sure that David stayed with him in battle from that day forward.

Friend, the point of this story is the point I have been making. God uses little things to show Himself strong. God uses the weak of this world to show that what He does is not the work of men. You or I look at the works of different men in awe and wonder, but God is greater than man, and can do more with less.

But of what practical use is this knowledge? “So what” if I know that God uses ways that I wouldn’t expect. This is why it is important. It could be friend, that for some time now you have realized that you are not right with God. You see, God is holy. The Bible says that with God is no sin. He dwells in absolute perfection. Anyone who comes to God must be perfect and holy. Perhaps you have realized this of late and it bothers you. You have tried going to church and doing some of the religious exercises, to no avail. You have given money and volunteered time, but you still feel as though your sin has separated you from your God.

This is a frustrating place to be, for sure. How does one make things right with the Creator of the Universe? How can you do enough where He would be pleased enough to forgive you and let you into heaven? Perhaps you know a little bit about God, and think that doing things will placate him. Maybe by being affiliated with a certain church, or by being baptized, or by teaching a Sunday School you will make God happy. Let me say to you this: Those ways are mans ways, not Gods ways. “Well,” you are saying, “what is God’s way then? How can I have my sins forgiven?” The answer is, as always, more simple than you think.

The Bible says that it is true that you have sinned. Romans 3:23 says, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” Every single person has sinned. In that you are right. But what to do about it? Friend, do you realize that this was a problem before you were born, and God has already found an answer to the problem? God has devised a way for you to get your sins forgiven and to have life with Him.

The answer is found in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was a Jewish man who lived almost 2000 years ago in Israel. He walked the Earth as a man, but the Bible says that he was both man and God. He walked this Earth in perfection, without sinning once. Because of that, he was undeserving of death, because the Bible says, “For the wages of sin is death.” But Jesus did die. Jesus allowed Himself to be crucified on a cross, but He did not die for His own sins. The Bible says that Jesus died for your sins. The Bible says that Jesus died to take upon Himself the penalty that you owed for your sin. Jesus paid it all. Scripture says, however, that Jesus did not stay dead. Three days after He was put in the tomb, the Bible says that God raised Jesus from the dead, and he appeared to many different people.

Now the question is this: Will you believe Him? The choice is before you. Will you believe what Jesus said about Himself when He said, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me.” Or will you say, “But I think there’s a different way.” Will you believe what Jesus said when He said, “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.” Or will you say, “It can’t be that simple.”

Let me say this: it isn’t very plausible that God would save the world by coming to the world as a first century Jew. It doesn’t make a lot of sense that a perfect person would allow Himself to die. It is even more unbelievable that my only hope for eternal salvation rests in trusting what that Jew did almost two thousand

years ago halfway around the world. But remember: God does not do things the way that you would do them. You might have had Jesus born as a great King born in a grand palace who offered salvation through some kind of ritual. But God sent Jesus born as a baby, to live a perfect life in poverty, and die as a criminal.

Friend, this is all God asks of you: that you will reject your way of getting to heaven in favor of His way. Let me share a few verses with you. Acts 4:12 says “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” There is no other way to heaven, but by Jesus, and His sacrifice.

1 John 5:11-13 say “And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.” These verses say some important things: One, they say salvation is given to us. It is a gift. Two, it says that those who do not have the Son, or Jesus, do not have life. Three, it says that you can know that you have eternal life. Many people that I talk to say, “You can’t know if you’ll go to heaven when you die.” But this verse says that the reason the author is writing is so that they would know that they have eternal life. Friend, you can know. Four, it says that this eternal life comes only from believing on Jesus Christ.

1 Timothy 2:3-6 say this: “For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.” These verses say that God wants all men to be saved, and that that salvation comes by coming to Jesus. It also says that Jesus is the only mediator between God and man. Now, it is true that Jesus is God, but Jesus also is in a unique position to intercede on our behalf. He is our advocate. Any attempt to reach God and heaven without Jesus Christ will ultimately fail, because God says there is only one way to Him.

I hope that this study has been a help to you. We have seen that God’s ways are not ours. God delights in using little and weak things, such as small voices, little boys with slings, and babies in mangers, to work His Plan. Embracing that will open to you God’s only way of blessing. If you have heard what I have said this morning and feel as though God has been speaking to you, I’d like very much if you would contact us about more information. If you have understood everything that I have said this morning and realized that you are a sinner with no hope of salvation but by the sacrifice of Jesus, let me invite you to do this: In your heart, tell God that you want His forgiveness based on what Jesus did for you. Tell Him that you believe that Jesus is the only way of salvation. If you will believe that from your heart, the Bible says you can be saved.

First Baptist Church exists to glorify God and to study His Word. In fact, we will be holding a Woman’s Bible Study starting on January 11. We will be studying the book of Ruth for about six weeks. You are invited to come, even if you are not a member of our church. If you’d like to come, we will be meeting every Monday from 11:45 to 12:30 at our church building. Please bring a lunch with you and enjoy the study of God’s Word. If you would like more information about our Bible study, this radio broadcast, or our church, you can contact us in the following ways.

You can stop by our church building, which is located at 909 West 8th St., by the softball diamonds. You can call us at 732-3321. Or you can e-mail us at church@fbcpr.org. That’s church at F B C P R dot O R G. If you would like a free copy of this program or a transcript, you may find it on our website tomorrow, which again is www.fbcpr.org. Please join us again next week for the Way of Truth Radio Broadcast, brought to you by the First Baptist Church of Park Rapids, Minnesota.