**The Unproven Sword**

**1 Samuel 17:38-39 KJV** And Saul armed David with his armour, and he put an helmet of brass upon his head; also he armed him with a coat of mail. **[39]** And David girded his sword upon his armour, and he assayed to go; for he had not proved *it.* And David said unto Saul, I cannot go with these; for I have not proved *them.* And David put them off him.

1. **INTRODUCTION—THE VALUE OF RESPONSIBILITY**
2. **General**

-There is a preparation process that God puts every man through. There is no immunity to God’s school of progress. We learn a multitude of lessons in the various outlets of life.

-It is called responsibility. There will come a time in your life when you will be skilled enough to pick up a sword but *until then* use the tools that God has given to you.

**Wendell Phillips**—Responsibility educates.

**J. G. Holland**—Responsibility walks hand in hand with capacity and power.

**Channing**—Every human being has a work to carry on within, duties to perform abroad, influences to exert, which are peculiarly his, and which no conscience but his own can teach.

**George Macdonald**—I find the doing of the will of God leaves me no time for disputing His plans.

**Rembrandt**—Try to put well in practice what you already know; and in doing so, you will, in good time, discover the hidden things which you now inquire about. Practice what you know, and it will help to make clear what you do not know.

-One of the things that rob us of fulfilling responsibilities to God and to ourselves is the fatal mistake of fighting imaginary wars in our heads or building castles in the mind. They ultimately come to nothing.

-There is a price-tag that comes with greatness:

* Greatness is not easy, it is difficult.
* Highlights don’t start at the free-throw line, they start in the gym.
* Every shot you take won’t be a game-winner.
* Substance is not built on flash, there has to be some fire burning on the inside.
* Greatness will teach you that failure will finally give up strength through determination.
* Painful hurts in life can be a motivation for you to be responsible.
* Few things in life are God-given, most of them you have to work for every day of your life.
* Greatness annuls excuses and pushes for excellence.

1. **Biblical**

**1 Corinthians 3:8 KJV** Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.

**Numbers 13:30 KJV** And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.

**1 Corinthians 9:24 KJV** Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

-There is a majesty that comes to us in the mundane. Some never realize the power of the common and the ordinary routines of life. But it is here that so much is worked out by the hand of God.

Ralph was a preacher who often preached Longhorn sermons. Every Sunday, he sweated in his pew while waiting to get up to preach. He would plead with the Lord “Give me a Word, Lord! Give me a Word!” Then he would get up and preach a Longhorn sermon. In case you are wondering what a Longhorn sermon is; a brief definition will make you understand. A Longhorn sermon is a couple of points with a lot of bull in between. Finally one day the Lord answered poor, desperate Ralph. The Lord said, “Ralph, I have a word for you. You’re lazy! If you would get to work, you would have something to preach! Now get busy and buckle down!”

-What Ralph was missing along with a whole host of other good saints is that not only is there majesty in the mundane but there is also mastery in the mundane. Skill comes to us often when we least expect it. Responsibility ushers it into our lives.

1. **DESCENDING INTO THE VALLEY OF ELAH**

-We come to this particular text and I feel certain that most everyone has heard the story of David and Goliath. It is a powerful story, a classic underdog tale, that all of us can feel like we have been a part of.

-I would think that everyone here has been in a place in life where they felt like that they were backed up against the biggest obstacle or trial of their life and saw no way to be able to defeat the giant that was before them.

1. **The Power in the Pasture**

-Every generation has its own unique people who come along and have the ability to change the nature and direction of history with a single courageous act.

* They aren’t overwhelmed by the terrible cries of the bully.
* They are not dazed by the intimidating array of firepower he has.
* They have fresh eyes of vision, unbroken nerves of faith, and a heart fired by godly zeal.

-Not only does that man have what it takes to get involved in the act of courage to do what is right, they have a history of victories that set them apart.

* They have walked with God in the solitary places of the pasture.
* They have watched sheep when they were so weary they could have fallen out.
* They know what it is like to find empty water-holes and browned-out pastures.
* They know what it is to sit up all night with a ewe that is about to lamb.
* They know what it is like to be careful and tender to a lamb that has been pulled from the jaws and claws of a predator.
* They have some dead bears and dead lions in their past.
* They have looked violent beasts right in the eyes and they are still standing.
* They know the value of working in the pasture.
* They know that special skills have come while they battled predators with the sling and stone.

-There are lessons you learn in the pasture that no school, Bible college, seminary, college classroom, leadership seminar, or book will ever educate you. Remember now that David had already been anointed to be the king of Israel.

* After his anointing, he went back to the pasture, not the throne.
* After his anointing, he went to watch sheep, not the courts of the palace.
* After his anointing, he went to protecting the flock.
* After his anointing, he went back to the pasture to sing songs and write psalms.
* After his anointing, he went back to the pasture to learn how to worship and be responsible.

-The anointing is never the factor; it is the worship after the anointing that becomes the leverage point of spiritual authority.

* You’re a preacher? Good. . . Are *you* praying or just preaching about praying?
* You’re a singer? Good. . . Can *you* worship when you aren’t leading?
* You’ve had the Holy Ghost twenty years? Good. . . But are *you* still on fire?
* You’ve been going to church since you were a kid? Good. . . But can *you* worship after you have been anointed.

-What we do with the anointing in the pasture, in the obscurity, in the hidden places hinges greatly on what takes place in the future. *There are many people who have lions and bears but they don’t have any victories.*  We can’t live like that!

-If the stone is going to pour out of David’s sling like a bullet heading for Goliath’s head, there has to be some preparation in the pasture. There were hours of practice behind that skill that David used the day he fought it out with Goliath.

-David had used that little sling so much that he had proven it. He had already tested it during some very difficult times. When you get to the biggest challenge of your life, you cannot afford to change your weapons then.

I can never forget a fellow telling me one time that I would never amount much to God. He told me that my problem was that I was “root-bound” as he said and nothing good would happen until I left Dothan. He told me that 90% of my ministry would never be developed here. You tell that kind of thing to a 25 year old kid and if they are about half-way spiritual they will go into all sorts of fasting, and praying, maybe even some exorcisms trying to get demons of apathy, laziness, a bad spirit out of their lives. That is exactly what I did. However, what he did not know, nor did I know either, was that I was in the pasture. I was learning lessons on how to worship, how to keep my spirit right, how to work in a church, and simply put, how to do the will of God!

-Be careful when you get around men that want to suit you up in their armor. They don’t know about your victories in the pasture. Furthermore when you are trying to use the armor of unspiritual people it can quickly turn into disastrous results.

-A man after God’s own heart can never fight in the worldly attire of an unbelieving king. Pastures prepare you for bigger battles. When you gain a victory in the pasture when no one is watching, we discover that before victory can never take place on public battlefields until private battlefields have been secured.

1. **The Voices of the Giants**

-While he was working that sling, God was at work in his heart. In fact, God was working in his heart in such a way that when David heard Goliath bellow the very first time, it stirred a holy rage up inside of him.

-If you have ever been there, you know what I am talking about.

* To see the things of God relegated to a lower place in the chambers of the soul.
* To see spiritual erosion taking place in the lives of individuals and corporately in churches.
* To see preachers who once preached the truth now waffling on the message.
* To see long-time saints who begin to question the core elements of the apostolic faith.
* To see the church accommodating the spirit of the age.
* To see entertainment at the expense of exposition.

-It causes a holy rage to well up inside of you. Those same feelings should get into us here in this local church. When we see giants and hear giants that intimidate and put people in places of fear, there out to be a cry that leaps from us. We want revival, we want spiritual fire, we want red-hot worship, heart-felt singing, and biblical preaching that will stretch us.

**Charles Spurgeon**—David’s hallowed life became the reflection of the light and the glory of the Lord of hosts. It had not occurred to him in his meditations that base men would dare to challenge the infinite majesty of God, or that proud adversaries would come forward and defy the chosen people of the Most High; and now that he hears the defiance and beholds the challenge, all his blood is up.

-David was about to get into the fight of his life! He refused to let the voice of Goliath cause him to begin living a lower life to please the enemy. That can happen sometime when we listen more to the giants than we do to God.

-Neglect the Word of God and it won’t be too long before the voices of the giants will close off your relationship with God. But if you are praying, worshipping, fasting, and reading the Word of God, you’ll stand up when you see that nobody else is going to! That is why we need the marks of the Cross to settle into our lives.

-David had already tussled with lions and bears and because he had, the next battle would take care of itself. You take care of your lions and bears and the giants will take care of themselves.

-When you descend into the valley of Elah, there are going to be some things that you will have to turn your back on. Weapons, plans, ideas, and gadgets that others may try to press in on you will have to be turned away from.

1. **The Danger of Unproven Swords**

-If you look carefully, you will discover that there were actually seven swords in the life of David:

* **The Unproven Sword**—The one offered by Saul (1 Samuel 17:39).
* **The Victorious Sword**—The second sword came on the same day (1 Samuel 17:51).
* **The Sword of the Covenant**—The third sword came about on a covenant between David and Jonathon (1 Samuel 18:4). It would have far-reaching effects into the life of Mephibosheth.
* **The Old Sword**—One preserved in a place of worship (1 Samuel 21:9) that brought him new victory.
* **The Restrained Sword**—The fifth sword was restrained and it saved Nabal, a churlish man (1 Samuel 25:13).
* **The Sword of Subterfuge**—This sword is mentioned as the one that killed Uriah (2 Samuel 11:25; 12:9-10).
* **The Sword of a Son**—The seventh sword is one David had to flee from. It was the one that probably troubled him the most because it was held by his son, Absalom (2 Samuel 15:14).

-All of these swords in David’s life are separate sermons in themselves. A lot of spiritual lessons come to us when we meditate on the Word of God.

-The one for now is the unproven sword. There is a danger of taking up swords that you have never tested or tried before.

* It places you in a position of living beyond your own commitment.
* It places you in a position of having to depend on your personal abilities.
* It places you in a position of a certain spiritual defeat.

-Goliath would have fared well if David came down into the valley that day with Saul’s sword. Your giants want you to do that too! They are more than willing for you to let pride take you to a high mountain that will lead to your failure.

* Giants of sensuality that shred the soul.
* Giants of worldliness that destroy our testimony.
* Giants of public opinion that makes us blend in.
* Giants of indifference to our calling.
* Giants of apathy to our mission.
* Giants of unbelief in our God.

-The giants that defy us aren’t found in valleys and they usually don’t have swords, shields, armor-bearers. Our giants intimidate us in our work-places, the classrooms, the hallways at school, the rooms of our homes, and sometimes the churches where we worship.

-Some weapons may appeal to others and even to us at first but if they are not tested, you need to back away from them. Let God choose your weapon for you and then you master that weapon.

1. **The Necessity of Believing**

-God puts us in pastures so that we can become believers. There is faith that is involved in your walk with God.

-God took David, a man who believed and put a lion in his path and then put a bear in his path. Because David was a believer and had faith, he slew the lion and he slew the bear. So when God decided that it was time, he put a huge giant in his path and David slew him too!

-If there was a severe crisis in your past life, stay with it because there are past victories and there will be future victories! God never changes and the church is His greatest concern of the hour.

**Malachi 3:6 KJV** For I *am* the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.

**Hebrews 13:8 KJV** Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.

1. **CONCLUSION—A STORY THAT ENCOURAGES USING WHAT YOU HAVE EXPERIENCE WITH**

Someone has prompted my memory to a story that I can remember from a number of years at the Alabama Ladies Conference told by Nancy Grandquist. She told about a time of monumental difficulty in her and her husband, Richard’s life. She had a daughter that for whatever reason decided to leave the church and backslide. Only she did not just backslide, she totally embraced practically everything the world had to offer. It threw Brother and Sister Grandquist into a terrific trial that the devil was going to use to destroy not just them but the church they were serving also. Their daughter so embraced the world that she turned her back on everything that she had been taught.

Leading up to this time of trouble, Sister Grandquist, a gifted and anointed singer/songwriter began to try to talk Richard into letting up on some of the standards of holiness that their church had taught for all of those years. Her excuse was that she wanted to junk all of it so that the church could grow. If Richard would just allow her to cut her hair and quit dressing modestly and start wearing make-up and so forth, they would get other people to come to the church. It would grow beyond their wildest dreams.

While she related that Richard would listen to her, he never wavered and just kept telling Sister Grandquist, that he had always been taught from his childhood up that holiness standards were important for the church and that to let down would not let a church grow but rather it would let the world come racing in to a point that it would overwhelm it and soon destroy it. So he just kept at his post and kept on preaching despite what was going on in the mind of the pastor’s wife. He also brought to her attention that those people who were throwing away their standards were losing their anointing and their apostolic power.

Sister Grandquist related that it wasn’t too much after that when her daughter lost her way and went to the world. While she was out in the world, she met a rough young man. So at fifteen years old, she ran off with a drug dealer. She said that her marriage was in trouble because she was rebelling against her husband. She said that the church was literally battling for its life because she was acting “like a heathen” (in her words).

During that time, she got desperate and went on a very lengthy extended fast. Thirty-three days into the fast, the Lord spoke to her and told her that if she would get back to holiness and separation that things would change.

Time marched on and Sister Grandquist said her daughter got pregnant out of wedlock. The father wasn’t the drug dealer it was another guy. The short side of a long story is this. This young man came to church and that church picked up their sling shots and started doing what they were supposed to do. The young man came and was filled with the Holy Ghost and ended up later on marrying Mindy Grandquist and they became the youth pastor and since have become the assistant pastor of that church.

-There is something about ignoring unproven swords and picking up what we know will work!

* Keep the faith!
* Stay on the path of righteousness!
* Do what is right!
* Stand for what the old-fashioned apostolic church stood for!