

## Preparation for Service pt2

Dr. Dennis Leatherman

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**Bible Text:** 1 Samuel 16:14-23; 1 Timothy 3:6

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### **Mountain Lake Independent Baptist Church**

1005 Broadford Road

Oakland, MD 21550

**Website:** [www.mlibc.org](http://www.mlibc.org)

**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/mlibc](http://www.sermonaudio.com/mlibc)

Okay, that helps. For you folks in Maryland. All right.

Okay, 1 Samuel 16 and I want to begin reading down in verse 14. Again, this is not really the passage, I'm not going to expound this passage, I guess is what I'm trying to say, but I'm going to use it to kind of get us started. We're actually, Lord willing, we're going to come back and we are going to go down through this passage and study it out but we're talking about King David, life of David, and we're early on on this, and I spent a good bit of time talking about the basis of God's choice of David, what are the characteristics about David that indicated he was a man after God's own heart, and that was the basis for God's choice, he was a man after God's own heart. And so we looked at all of that, now last week or the week before, whenever we were at this last time, we were looking at, we started looking at not the basis for God's choice but we're looking at his preparation for service and what God did in his life to prepare him for the role that God had for him. So, like I said, I'll begin reading at verse 14, I'm going to read down through the end of the chapter and just kind of lay some groundwork here.

14 But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him. 15 And Saul's servants said unto him, Behold now, an evil spirit from God troubleth thee. 16 Let our lord now command thy servants, which are before thee, to seek out a man, who is a cunning player on an harp: and it shall come to pass, when the evil spirit from God is upon thee, that he shall play with his hand, and thou shalt be well. 17 And Saul said unto his servants, Provide me now a man that can play well, and bring him to me. 18 Then answered one of the servants, and said, Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, that is cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the LORD is with him. [What a great statement there, huh?] 19 Wherefore Saul sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, Send me David thy son, which is with the sheep. 20 And Jesse took an ass laden with bread, and a bottle of wine, and a kid, and sent them by David his son unto Saul. 21 And David came to Saul, and stood before him: and he loved him greatly; and he became his armourbearer. 22 And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, Let David, I pray thee, stand before me; for he hath found favour in my sight. 23 And it came to pass, when the evil spirit

from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand: [look at this] so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.

Now again this is completely aside, this is not the subject but does anybody remember the three ways that music effects us from that last verse? We mentioned this last time, anybody remember those three areas that music will impact us? Anybody remember what we said? What is it? All right, it's very therapeutic but there's three areas of our being that it effects. One is physically. Did you notice that? It says that he played with his harp and Saul was refreshed. So it effects us physically. How many people ever were in a restaurant or somewhere and there was some music playing that you wouldn't normally listen to but you inadvertently find yourself tapping your foot? Anybody know what I'm talking about? Anybody here hear a certain kind of music and it brings back nostalgic feelings from a long time ago? I guess the older you get the more that we experience that. So it effects us physically, it really does. It has a profound effect on us and it effects us emotionally, brings back that nostalgic feeling sometimes and anybody have a song, that song just brings tears to your eyes? Anybody know what I'm talking about? Even just the music itself could. And then it effects us spiritually and there's no doubt and there's no doubt music has a profound spiritual impact and it's very very important.

So that's an aside but let's have a word of prayer and we're going to look at several ways that God prepared David for his role as king of Israel.

*Father, I ask you to bless now our time in your word and I am grateful for folks that made the effort to come out, and I pray it would be worth our time and our effort, that you would speak to us and you would teach us. And Lord, I'm absolutely convinced that you have a plan and a purpose for all of us regardless of our stage in life, and that you are now working in our lives to prepare us for what you have ahead, and so fill me with your Spirit, I pray. I present my body anew and pray that you would speak through this mouth and tongue of mine, through my mind and my words, and speak to all of our hearts I ask. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

Remember, we pointed out just by way of introduction, we already started this, we pointed out the fact that the transition from King Saul to King David was a fairly simple process. There wasn't a whole lot to it, it was simply a matter of Samuel doing exactly what God said and we saw that in the early part of this chapter. And so when God does things, God's work is not really that complicated. I boil it down to two basic ingredients to let God work in my life. 1. Trust him. 2. Obey him. And that's what Samuel did. Samuel just had to go where God told him to go, say what God told him to say, and do what God told him to do, and that was the transition over from King Saul to King David.

Then there was also we said it was pretty sudden. It was pretty sudden. One day David's out on the side of a hillside watching sheep and the next day he's the anointed future king of Israel, unbeknownst to him, unanticipated, and just what one day what big of a change one day can bring to our lives. And we talked about that.

Then we pointed out that it was an extremely secure promise. It was a simple process, it was a sudden promotion, and it was a secure promise. When God said, "David, you are going to be king," he was going to be king. That was secure. And remember we mentioned later on when Saul's chasing him all around the countryside throwing javelins at him, he got reasoning in his heart and he says, "I'm going to one day die by this man." That was not a true reasoning. That was not true. God had promised him he would be king and he wouldn't have had to defect to the Philistines, he could have stayed there. God was going to make sure he wasn't going to die. So the application to that was if God tells us something we can be sure about it. We can be sure about it. If God says I have eternal life, I can be sure I have, what? Eternal life. David was no more going to die, you and I have no more danger of going to hell once we trust Christ than David was in danger of dying at the hands of Saul. He was secure. God's promise was secure.

Now we come, we have the basis for God's choice, we spent several messages on that, now we have the preparation for service. God can use a man or a woman that maybe doesn't have great skills or maybe doesn't have great talents but they are a man or a woman of character, and if a person has character, if they have integrity, God can use that person in spite of the fact they might be limited in talents. You follow what I'm saying, understand what I'm saying? And so David was very gifted but first and foremost he was a man of integrity, he was a man of character, and so now God, now we see, we're going to look at how God worked in this young man of integrity, this young man of character, and how God worked to prepare him for a tremendous role he had.

I put this down: a man of David's caliber, when we read his life and how he is so exalted in scripture and so honored by the Lord, a man of that caliber, he doesn't get that way just overnight; there has been a process in place, there have been things doing, God has been doing things to bring this young man along to reach the caliber of a man that David became and so that's what I want to look at. I mean, the interesting thing is how many people noticed here that when he was anointed king, he was anointed king, he didn't immediately become king, did you notice that? I mean, it was many years from when he was anointed to when he became king, and that was all necessary for God working in him, developing him, molding him to become the man that he needed to be to fill that role that God had called him to fill. That's true in God's call to ministry whether it's a call to the pastorate or to missions or to evangelism, or if it's a call to teach a Sunday school class, or to have a role and a ministry in a local church of some sort. It takes time for God to prepare for someone for that role, that ministry.

I want to, if you would, take your Bibles and turn with me, keep your place here, I guess you can, we're going to spend a good bit of time in the New Testament. Come back with me, if you would, to 1 Timothy 3. Here he's talking about the pastor, the bishop, the overseer of the church, and he's giving these lists of qualifications, these requirements for a man to be a pastor. 1 Timothy 3 and if you'll notice there he says, verse 1, "This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good," what? "Work." So pastoring is work. A good work, "A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, of good behaviour, sober," he comes down through the list here but when you get down to verse 6, look what he says, he says, if a man desires to be a bishop, he gives this

list, then he says, verse 6, "Not a," what? "Not a novice." What is a novice? A beginner, somebody new. You could put it this way, somebody inexperienced, right? He's a novice. He's a rookie, maybe you could say. Why in the world would he say you shouldn't put somebody in a position of responsibility like that that's a novice? What would be the reason? He tells us, everybody looking there? Y'all are quiet tonight.

6 Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.

He's vulnerable. In other words, this is what I'm trying to get at, if a person is going to fulfill that position God has called them to do, in this case the bishop, the pastor of a church but the application is anywhere, there has to be preparation, there has to be some preparation. You don't take a guy that gets saved on Sunday and make him a deacon on Wednesday, right? Somebody gets saved one day, you don't have them teach the Sunday school class the next day. You give them time. They've got to learn. They need to be developed. They need to be prepared. And so that's what we see taking place with David.

It's true with the Apostle Paul. Now he's an exceptional man. He got saved and he's on fire for God immediately and we've seen that, but God didn't put him in positions of tremendous responsibility until he had spent a period of time in Arabia, Galatians 1 tells us that, and some say he was there three years, I had a professor in Bible college, he suggested he may have been out in this wilderness being taught by the Lord himself for 13 years before he stepped into the leadership role and the positions God had for him. So there's a principle in scripture that preparation, what's the saying they had sometimes they say, "A call to preach is a call to prepare." And that's true. God prepares us. God works in our lives. The disciples 3 ½ years with the Lord Jesus Christ. God's working in their life. He's discipling them, preparing them for the ministry.

So we see King David, he's anointed, he doesn't immediately become king, there's a period of time here that he's to be prepared and God working in his life. I think very seldom do we realize the preparation God is doing in our lives. How many people here since you've been saved you've ever been through a trial? Anybody at all? If you didn't raise your hand, you're lying unless you got saved 20 minutes ago. Why does God allow those trials in our lives? Ah, to mature us. Why is he maturing us? Why does he want me to be a mature Christian? So that I can be a more effective, so I can fulfill that purpose he's saved me to fulfill, that ministry or that purpose in life that he's saved me to. So God allows these trials in our lives.

Take your Bibles, you're still here in the New Testament, go to 1 Corinthians. Now I don't consider myself a great counselor, I really don't, I know basically what the Bible says we should do, I'm kind of those counselors like, "Well, go read your Bible. Trust God. Do what's right. Pray. Go to church." You know? And so some guys maybe have a little more insight into things that I do, I try to help, but one thing I have learned is that every trials, every difficulty, every heartache that God allows us to face, and not all of them are necessarily his will but he does allow them, and he allows them for the purpose

of preparing me and enabling me to be helpful to someone else down the road that goes through that same trial.

2 Corinthians 1, look with me, if you would, at verse 3. What I was trying to say there was somebody sits down with me maybe or whatever, one of the first things I try and point out is say, "Listen, God is allowing you to deal with this and struggle with this and face this battle for a reason," and this passage gives us the reason. "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort," look at this, "Who comforteth us in all our tribulation." Question: how many people have ever been through a tough time and God helped you through that? Anybody know, "God helped me through that. Boy, God helped me. Phew, that was tough. Man, I cried my eyes out. That broke my heart. That hurt so bad but God helped me and God comforted me and God got me through that." Listen, he didn't do that just for you to come out of it, I mean that's part of it, look what the rest of this verse says, "Who comforteth us in all our tribulation," look at this, "that we may be able to," what? "Comfort them which are in any trouble," look at this, "by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."

Do you see what he's saying here? He's saying, "I'm letting you go through this trial, letting you fight this battle, I'm letting you struggle with this area or this issue, I'm allowing that so that you will learn that I can help you through that, I can comfort you through that, I can get you through that so that when you down the road somewhere come across somebody, they're going to go through that same thing, you can say to them, 'Hey, listen, let me tell you what God did for me. Let me show you how God comforted me.'" So I can comfort them with the comfort God gave me. Somebody is having marital issues and they're having a struggle going through that. Listen, it is vitally important that we be able to work through those issues and get victory over that and come and get that thing settled because there's more at stake than just you and I having a nice marriage. God has somebody down the road he knows we're going to come to and what he's trying to do in my life, he's preparing me to help them down the road. And so if I don't get victory over whatever the issue is, if I don't come through that and trust God and let him work it out, then I'm not going to be able to meet the needs and help those who I'm going to come across down the road. Am I making sense?

So this matter of preparation is extremely important. God is continually working in our lives, continually working in our lives, and the things he allows in our lives, the struggles, the battles we have, we're going to see this in a bit, not just so that I can be a strong Christian. No, it's so that I am prepared and equipped to help someone else that goes through that, and so an important principle in this, it is imperative, I put this down, it is imperative that we work through these issues and get the victory because someone in the future is going to be dependent upon me having that victory and me being able to help them.

So if you've got a struggle, if you've got a battle going on, if there's something you're dealing with and you say, "Oh, I just quit. I'm going to walk away from it." Don't do that. If David had done that in some of the struggles he went through, he could not have fulfilled the role that God had for him to fill. And so the worst thing a Christian can do in

a time of struggle, in the time of battle, in the time of maybe discouragement, the worst thing we can do is quit. You say, "Well, it won't affect anybody." Yes, it will because God allowed this for a reason and others are going to need what God's trying to give you in that trial. And so preparation is incredibly important. Mark this down, I wish you'd write this down somewhere: God is preparing me. He is. You say, "Well, what for?" David didn't know what he was being prepared for, we'll see that, but God was preparing him. Why in the world would a bear and a lion attack me? Just so David can show his prowess and kill that bear and the lion with his hands? No, God was preparing him because he was going to have some big bears and big lions down the road.

So God is preparing me just as God prepared David for his role. I went off here. Did I go off? It says off, that means it's off, right?

I would imagine David at the time had no idea why he's watching these sheep and a bear and a lion show up and attack them. How many people that would make you nervous? Yeah. And all you've got is a spear or an arrow. He had no idea what God was preparing him for. He had no idea why these tests were. Why in the world is God allowing Saul to chase me all around this wilderness, treat me like I'm a dog, treat me like I'm some wild animal he's trying to kill? Why would God let me be treated that way? I'll tell you why, because God was preparing him, teaching him to trust God and have faith in God. And so God was preparing him. I would imagine David had no idea why he went through the difficulties and trials and tests that he was facing but God was preparing him.

I've got and if we don't get them, we don't get to them, but I've got four classes, four courses that David had to take to graduate from his college of preparation. Four courses and I tried to alliterate them and some of the words really don't make sense but they all match with the same letter so I used them.

1. I put this down: the course on barrenness. The course on barrenness and what I mean by barrenness is this, to be in solitude, to be alone. If you'll study the life of David, his early days, what was his job? What was his responsibility in the beginning of his life? Take care of sheep, to be a shepherd boy. Where did they do that at? In the city, on the streets where all the people are and noise and parties and fun? No. It's where? It's out in the side of a hillside out in the wilderness. I'm suggesting to you that David spent most of his youth alone, most of his teenage years were not hanging out at the mall with a bunch of punks, most of his teenage years were spent on the side of a hillside with a bunch of sheep and the stars over his head in the wilderness. Why would God let a young boy be alone most of this time? God's preparing him in that solitude, in that aloneness.

David, I got thinking about this and I put it this way, David's schoolhouse in his early years was the wilderness. His schoolhouse was those barren hills in Judea outside of Bethlehem there. That's where he went to school. That's where he learned the purpose of life and that's where God taught him truths that we find in the book of Psalms that for thousands of years have helped millions of people. Out when he was alone. Out when he was alone.

David's teachers, I put this down, David's teachers were the nights alone under the stars with God. Do you ever read Psalm 19? "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth his handiwork, day unto day utters speech," and I'm not getting the rest of it right but he talks about the sun running like a groom across the sky. Where did he learn all that? Out alone on the side of a mountain, out alone in the wilderness. God was teaching him. God was teaching him in his aloneness.

Long nights alone with God, difficult situations where he had nobody he could turn to. He's out there by himself. The only one he could turn to was to trust God. I'm telling you, being alone is not the worst thing in the world. Sometimes God lets us be awfully lonely so that we learn to look to him so he can teach us things. I'll tell you, a lonely, how shall I say this, leaderships is an awfully lonely position a lot of times. I thank God for the church here and the dearest friends in my life I've ever had are in this church here, but I'll tell you, it can be lonely and sometimes and even in your role, I guarantee just about every one of us here, if not all of us could say, "You know, there's been times in my life the only person I could talk to was God." Can I get a witness? I couldn't talk to anybody else about this, God was the only one. I'm suggesting to you that's a good place. That's where God's teaching us that we can talk to him, that we can trust in him. How many times did the Apostle Paul say, "All men forsook me. No man stood with me." Do you know what Paul had learned out in that Arabian wilderness? He learned that when man failed him, he could still trust in God. God prepared him for that.

So David is being prepared. He was out there, he was learning great responsibilities, developing his character as a young man by himself, taking care of a flock of sheep. And by the way, that sheep, they were important. It wasn't a hobby. Sheep were a vital factor of the economics of that day. That was a tremendous investment on his father's part and that was a huge responsibility for him to make sure he gets back with 100 sheep, not 99, as we've invested in that. And if a bear shows up, you don't let that bear kill those sheep. It's our livelihood. So David kills the bear. He trusts God, puts his life on the line, he kills the bear and he kills the lion. Would he have learned what God could do if he had 25 other people with him? No. God let him be alone so he could learn to trust God and God could develop him.

I suggest this, I put this down: his flock of sheep were pretty good teachers. That lion and the bear that showed up, they were pretty good teachers in David's schoolhouse. That night sky was a good teacher. He looked up there and he saw God's glory and he learned of the magnificence and the power and the awesomeness of God. Pretty good teachers out there alone, barren.

So he took the course of barrenness. Depth of character is developed not in noisy crowds or in busy streets but in quiet alone places. I was reading a little article and they made a statement and it made me think of this: shallow people tend to need noise. They tend to have to have noise all the time. The radio has got to be on all the time. The tv has to be on all the time. There has to be some earbuds in my ears, something going on in that brain all the time. Why? Why is that? I think sometimes it's because we don't like our thoughts; we need something to drown it out. I don't know why that is but I know this, it's good for

us to be quiet and alone. There's a reason we call our devotions sometimes "my alone time with God." Get alone with God so God can speak, God can teach, God can develop me and help me be a stronger Christian, be prepared to serve him.

You say, "Preacher, we've got a radio station. That should be on all the time." Listen, you want it on all the time, that's good, but you know, sometimes and you ask my wife, in the car I don't want any noise, I just want to be with my thoughts. I just want quiet. And I think God allowed David to be out there in that quiet mountainside so he could teach him.

Jesus Christ, right or wrong, did he often go off to be alone? Mark 1:35 and there are about six other passages that said he went out in the mountainside alone, went out in the mountainside alone, alone, alone. Paul was forsaken, as I said.

So I think if I'm going to be effective for God, if God is going to use me, I need to be comfortable with being alone sometimes, I need to be comfortable with silence and let the Lord speak to my heart and have his way. As a young boy, David learned to be alone with God, to be alone with his thoughts. He was comfortable alone with that and as a result he was a deeply spiritual man and he was a powerful spiritual leader, and God used the barrenness, the class of barrenness to develop him and prepare him. Here's my advice: turn off the tv, turn off the radio, take out the headphones and set aside the smartphone, and learn to be comfortable alone with God, just to be alone and quiet with God. God uses that to help us.

2. He took the course, now the first one was barrenness, not the best word but it starts with a "b." The second one is a course on boredom. Again, that's not really what I want but it starts with a "b" and the other two are what I want and they start with a "b" so I used it. But what I mean by that is this: monotony. Monotony. Think about David out there on the hillside. You get up in the morning, let's see, make sure all the sheep are here, get them down to the water, still waters, let them drink, take them over to some fresh grass, watch out for bears and lions, get them to a safe place, put them down to sleep. Get up in the morning, make sure they're all still there, take them down to the still water, get them over to some fresh grass, give them a nap, get them watered, put them to sleep. Next morning same thing. I mean, it's just the same thing over and over and over. How many folks have found out that much of life is just doing the same thing over and over and over? Get up. Get up, brush your teeth, go off to work, come home, eat supper, go to bed. Get up. You say, "Why do you work?" So I can have money to have a house. "Why do you have a house?" So I can have a place to live so I can work, you know?

But much of life is just the same thing over and over and over and over. Hey, I've got news for you, how many folks have found out that being in the Christian life, most of that is simply doing the same thing over and over and over and over? I think there's a reason God calls the Christian life a walk. I've said this many times before, the Christian life is putting one foot in front of the other and then doing that again, and then doing that again, and then doing that again. And God put David out in a barren place and just taking care of sheep, doing the same thing over and over and over and over. It's funny, the Bible says

that Enoch walked with God. It doesn't say he was doing jumping jacks with God or skipping or running in circles. It was just every day he got up and he walked with God. He had his, maybe I don't know what all that entailed but for you and I, get up and read my Bible, let God speak to my heart, pour my heart out to God, go through my daily routine trusting the Lord, asking him to lead me and direct me and give me wisdom, use me, help me be a witness. Then the next day doing it again. Get up Sunday morning, go to church, Sunday night, go to church, Wednesday night, go to church. Sunday morning, go to church. Good grief, we go to church every Sunday. Yeah, that's what God uses to develop us.

I was talking to somebody, I could not remember who it was, and I said, "You know, I've found out that the minister, a young fellow in the ministry said, 'I found out the ministry is a lot of just doing the same thing over and over.'" I said, "Brother, you'd better buckle down because that's pretty much what it is. God's given us clear instructions and we just stay at it." Dr. Lee Robertson told a leadership class, the one I was in, and he said, "I have basically 10 doctrines I work into my messages and I just preach them over and over and over, get them into people's heads."

A shallow person needs everything to be sensational. Now I like sensational, I like doing big things, I like things big, but everything can't be big. Not everything is sensational. If you emphasize everything, you emphasize nothing, right? Most of life, most of serving God, most of preparation is learning just to be faithful in the little things over and over and over and over, and then God can do some big things.

Most days are not the greatest days of my life. I thought of little Evan, "Oh, this is the greatest meal I've ever had in my life." Next meal, "This is the greatest meal I've ever had in my life." So they keep getting better, you know? It's an exciting way to live but the truth of the matter is most of their days... How many folks would say that today probably on the grand scale of things wasn't the greatest day of all your life? How many people would say today? How many people say yesterday probably wasn't the greatest day of all my life? It's just an ordinary day. But God is looking for people who will be faithful to him on the ordinary days. God's looking for people who will walk with him and read their Bible and be a witness when revival meeting isn't going on, when we're just working and doing our thing, right?

And that's what David had to learn because a lot of his ministry as a king, a lot of his role as a king was going to be just doing administrative stuff, same stuff over and over and over and over, and if he couldn't be faithful in that, then God couldn't trust him in great things. Most of our days are just ordinary days of sameness and if we can walk with God on the "boring days," then we can have some depth to us and God can trust us and use us.

All right, so he had the course in barrenness, the course in boredom, now we're getting to the words I want. He has a course in obscurity. Obscurity. He's out there unknown. How was that, Laura, pretty good? My wife loves it when I do that stuff. It's a "b." The way I spell it, it starts with a "b." But think about this, David's out there, he's unknown, for the most part he's unseen, he's unrecognized, but he's faithful and God was teaching him,

"David, you don't have to be in front of everybody to live for me. You've got to learn to be able to live for me whether anybody sees it or not. You've got to learn to be able to trust me whether you get any recognition for it or not." Watch out for the Christian that has to be praised for every little thing they do for God. That is not a very strong Christian. There's not much depth to that Christianity. And over the years I've been in the ministry, I've had some people over the years if they weren't publicly thanked for everything they did, well, then they ain't doing it. Well, that's awfully shallow and nobody like that's going to accomplish a whole lot for God. But you find somebody that's going to do things for God, is going to serve God, is going to be faithful to God whether anybody sees it or not, whether they get recognized or not, that's a person God can use. That's a person God can use.

I'm thinking of some great preachers back in little hollers in West Virginia and I guess there's hollers in other places besides West Virginia, I'm thinking of some great preachers, they never had a sermon in the "Sword," they've never been on the radio, they've never been anything of that, in fact, you said their name in independent circles, they'd say, "I never heard of him." But I'm telling you, there are great champions of God that are unknown and unseen by the rest of the world yet God sees them. There are folks in church, in our church here that do things for God, are faithful in serving God in great ways, and yet maybe hardly anybody in the church even knows what they're doing, just somebody that's in church, sits in church there yet they're being faithful to the Lord.

I was thinking of, I don't want to embarrass her, but Doreen, right or wrong. I'm telling you, that girl gives out tracts, that girl witnesses, that girl prays, she says because God is so good to me. She's got how many issues? Cancer and different things the Lord brought her through. You talk to her, how many people has she said to you, "God's been so good to me"?

I'm telling you, that is character and that's what God was teaching David, just out of the way, unseen but yet he's killing lions and bears. He doesn't know why because God's preparing him for something. He's writing little songs about the sky and about what God's teaching him. I don't think he had any idea at the time that these were going to be preserved, inspired and preserved in the eternal word of God. But he's just being faithful, being faithful, being faithful.

Character, you've heard this before, character is revealed by what I am when no one else is around, right? Character is revealed by what I do when no one else sees me. My attitude and my service to God when no one else knows. That's what reveals our character and God and so I got thinking about that, if that reveals my character, what I am, who I am when no one else sees me, no one else is around, and what I do when no one else sees me, that reveals my character so my question was this: what develops my character? If that reveals it, what do I do that develops my character? And this was my conclusion, my conclusion was this: by deliberately doing what is right and trusting God even though nobody else knows or sees it. By consciously deciding, "Nobody's here. I can do whatever I want. Nobody would know. I am going to consciously, I'm making a conscious decision I'm going to trust God and do what God tells me to do even if nobody

knows." That is where our character is developed and I want to suggest to you that is where David learned out in the wilderness, no one's around, nobody sees him, no applause, and he made the conscious decision, "I will trust God." He said this in one of the Psalms and I don't have the reference, just came to mind. He says, "I have chosen the way of truth." I'm going to suggest to you he learned that out in the mountainside, "I'm going to do right regardless if anybody sees me. I'm choosing to do what's right even though nobody knows."

So obscurity. Obscurity. My character is developed, I came up with a term, I like this term, my character is developed in obscure obedience. Do you follow what I'm trying to say with that? Obedience, even though it's unknown to anybody but God, obscure obedience, unpraised. That was one of the things and I didn't know this but when I worked for four years as assistant in Indianapolis in the church there, I'll tell you, that was tremendous training for me. When I worked under Brother Holmeshire for three years out there, obscurity, you know, just behind the scenes doing stuff. That was tremendous for me to learn that and David out in obscurity.

Let me give you the last one real quick. Everybody doing okay, getting caught up on your rest and all? Good. The fourth one, the fourth course he had to take before he could graduate and be prepared to be king, to be prepared to establish the throne that someday the Savior would sit on, the throne of David, one other thing, of course, he had to take and I put this down: the course in battles. In battles, and by that I mean adversity, struggles and trials, lions and tigers and bears, giants. I'm telling you, we're going to in this little series, we're going to get to David and Goliath. I love that story. There is so much there you could spend two years in a series on just that one event, and we might, but that is profound. Is that just the story of a young boy that did this amazing thing? No. That is a profound impact on David's life, preparing him to be king of Israel, to establish the throne that Jesus will someday sit on.

Profound. God puts him through these battles. He's got a psychotic king chasing him all over the wilderness trying to kill him for no reason other than just raw jealousy, and God's letting him go through that. You say, "This doesn't even make sense. These people are doing stuff that is ridiculous. Why are they treating me this way? Why are they treating me this way?" Maybe they're psycho but God's allowing it so that I can be developed, I can grow stronger.

How many people here ever come across someone that's antagonistic? I didn't say you live with someone that way, I said you've come across somebody that's antagonistic? There, more hands went up. How many people have ever thought, "Why in the world, they do they treat me like this?" Anybody know anybody like that? "Why in the world are they that way? Why do you have to be that way?" Well, maybe one reason God's allowing it is so that I can display what a disciple does. All right, I want you to show people how a disciple treats somebody that's antagonistic to you. Question: how do disciples treat people that are antagonistic to us? We love them. What about people that curse us, what do we say back to them? What did Jesus say? "Bless them that curse you." What about people that use us despitely? We do good to them, right, and we pray for

them. So God allows these battles, these struggles in our lives and people like this in our lives so I can develop my spiritual maturity, I can become a stronger, better disciple and so God's using that to make me better so I can serve him, make me stronger.

Turn with me and we're going to end with this, James 1, and look with me at verse 2. We're familiar with this passage, I'm sure. James 1:2, "My brethren," if you didn't know the Bible, this verse would blow you away. "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations," and the word "temptation" there is used there, he's talking about trials, difficulties, heartaches. What? Count it all joy? Why? Verse 3, "Knowing this," here's our assurance, "that the trying," the testing, the battles, the adversaries in your faith, "the trying of your faith worketh," what? "Patience." You say what's so great about patience? Look at verse 4, patience produces something, patience is a process, it's a road that I'm traveling to get somewhere, "But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be," what? "Perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

All right, class participation time. You guys need to wake up a little bit. What does he mean when he says that patience, "But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect"? Aha, I'm glad nobody said sinless because that's not what it means. So I can be complete, so I can be mature. Perfect and what's the next word? Entire. What is that? If you ate the entire pie, you ate the whole thing and that means so I can be every part of my life is what God wants me to be, every aspect of my life is exactly, I am mature, I'm complete, I'm all that God wants me to be. And what is the beginning stage of getting to that point, counting it all joy when I fall into divers temptations? In doing that, I learn patience, and by being patient, I become complete, mature, perfect, entire, I'm all that God wants me to be.

So I'm suggesting to you that battles and struggles are necessary for us to be the kind of Christian God wants us to be and they were necessary for David to be prepared for the man he wanted to be. It is the trials of life that strengthen us, develop our faith, clarify our priorities and instill courage. Nobody ever became strong by sitting in a sauna all day long every day, right? Nobody. If you're going to get strong, you've got to get out, you've got to work out, there needs to be resistance, there needs to be difficulty. No pain, no gain. Well, God says no trials, no development. Trials are part of our preparation.

Strength and maturity require two things. Strength and maturity require two things: time and struggle. It requires time. It takes time to grow. And by the way, let me just throw this in as an aside. If there's a new Christian and they're not everything they ought to be, do you know what the best thing we can do is give them time. Give them time to grow. Give them time to develop. Give them time to let God work in their life. I've seen it over the years, man, some person gets saved, a Christian gets saved and they're not everything maybe they ought to be yet, some Christian that's been saved forever, self-righteous, judgmental, and they're all over them because they're not everything they ought to be yet. The fact of the matter is, in God's eyes that young Christian might be a better Christian than that old mossy, horned, what? Geezer. Not necessarily old, they might be young and get that way. You follow what I'm trying to say? Time and struggle. Time and struggle. Time and struggle. So don't cut ourselves short. There's no shortcuts in Christian life.

You say, "I want God to use me." Well, then be prepared to be used, right? "I feel like I'm being used." Just pray that God would use you, right? So time and struggle. Time and struggle.

It is the little things that prove our ability to deal with the big issues of life. And so I look at David's life and I see four areas that God allowed him and was necessary for him to deal with if he was going to be that caliber of a man that God wanted him to be. One of them was barrenness, he had to learn to be alone. He had to be able to trust God even if no one else around him was trusting God. He needed to be able to do right even if no one else around him was doing right. Barrenness, what was the second one? And then obscurity was the third one, boredom, just same thing over and over and over, and then the battles. So if you're going through a battle, count it all joy, God's preparing you, God's got somebody down the road that's going to go through that same battle and you'll be able to say to them, "Hey, let me tell you what God taught me. Let me show you how God helped me get victory in that area. Let me tell you how God helped me resolve that issue that we couldn't get past and finally we just died to self and trusted God, let him make that thing what it ought to be. And let me tell you how God helped us." Right?

I've come from a broken home, you all know that. I grew up in my teenage years and all of that, do you know what I found out after I got saved? I found out especially when I was with the teens and young people, I found out I was working with a lot of young people that came from, what? Broken homes and went through the same thing. Now let me ask you this: if I said to that young person, say, "Hey, man, I know how you feel." Does that help them? "Well, great, what's that do for me?" But do you know what I could do? I could say, "Hey, let me tell you how God helped me. When I got saved I was so bitter, I was so bitter. Let me tell you how God helped me have victory over bitterness." Just telling them how I feel, that's meaningless. If I can tell them what God did for me and how God helped me get over bitterness, then I can help them. But I had to be able to get over it, right?

So God prepares us. God let's us go through these things to prepare so we can help others. Did this make sense tonight? Y'all are like 10 miles away from me so I hope you can hear me, except for Brian and Sandy and Brett and Jenny.

Let's pray.

*Father in heaven, I hope this was helpful tonight. I know it helped me in preparing it and I pray you'd help us see that our lives, the daily mundane things of life, the struggles in life, the lonely times, Lord, when we do things and we don't get recognized, help us to see all of that as part of your plan, you allowing this so that we may become stronger and more effective in helping others and pointing others to Christ. I pray you'd help us to be submissive to you and have faith in you and die to self, and let you accomplish that work, mold us like that clay that Jeremiah talked about. You are the great Potter. We want to be used of you.*

With our heads bowed and our eyes closed, how many people would say, "Preacher, I really do, and be honest now, I really do want God to use me. I really do." Is there any like that tonight, I really do? Sure, we do. What kind of Christian wouldn't be that way. And I say this, then we need to be ready, we need to be willing to let God work and let God have his way and don't fight it, don't get bitter, don't buck against it, but say, "Lord, do what you need to do. Accomplish this deep work in my life that I can be that Christian, I can be somebody that you can use to help others."

*Father in heaven, bless now our invitation.*