

Series: New Mercies	Reference: 1 Samuel 9:1-27; 10:1-2; 17:1-58	Title: Procrastination	Date: 01.23.2022
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Change is hindered when we put off responsibility. We can't allow procrastination to hinder spiritual growth. But sometimes we avoid the necessary difficulties, conversations, or responsibilities God places before us which would bring it. Passivity is fear & lack of faith, having dire effects on spiritual growth. It stands in the way of that to which God calls, His glory, and which would otherwise grow us.			

COLOR CHANGES IN TEXT INDICATE SLIDE CHANGES

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Turn with me to p188 in your pew Bibles to 1 Samuel 9:2-27, the story of Saul anointed Israel's King as a young man. In v2 it says...²*Kish had a son named Saul, as handsome a young man as could be found anywhere in Israel, and he was a head taller than anyone else.* ³*Now the donkeys belonging to Saul's father Kish were lost, and Kish said to his son Saul, "Take one of the servants with you and go and look for the donkeys."*

Saul goes on a 3 day trek looking for these donkeys, can't find them & decides to return home since his father would no doubt worry. But his servant suggests they go see a prophet in a local town. Maybe he'll tell them where to find the donkeys. So off they go for one last try (v14)...*up to the town, and as they were entering it, there was Samuel, coming toward them on his way up to the high place.* ¹⁵*Now the day before Saul came, the Lord had revealed this to Samuel:* ¹⁶*"About this time tomorrow I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin. Anoint him ruler over my people Israel; he will deliver them from the hand of the Philistines. I have looked on my people, for their cry has reached me."* ¹⁷*When Samuel caught sight of Saul, the Lord said to him, "This is the man I spoke to you about; he will govern my people."*

When they meet, Samuel tells Saul his donkeys have already returned & invites him to stay the night saying, ^{20b}*...And to whom is all the desire of Israel turned, if not to you & your whole family line?"* Then in 10:1 he anoints Saul as king saying...*"Has not the Lord anointed you ruler over his inheritance?"*

Imagine being a young shepherd from the smallest & least of tribes searching for sheep & suddenly some prophet's proclaiming you king! Saul's described as more handsome & taller than anyone else. His name's translated as 'Ask for', reminiscent of the request of Israel in chapter 8 asking God for a king. God was actually supposed to be their king, they were to be light to other nations in following Him, inviting other people groups into that relationship. But they wanted to be like the nations with their own earthly king.

Saul was that answer. The term 'Young man' is translated from a word which also means 'Chosen One'. God chose Saul for this role, with the original language suggesting he wasn't only *one* of the best of Israel, he was the best! He looked like a king & was chosen & anointed by God to be so! He's the good looking quarterback on track to have college fully paid for - good looking, talented, strong & smart! The guy everyone wants to be! He should be extremely confident, not just in physical gifting, but in calling to step forward to any challenge in being chosen by God to be king of Israel!

Fast forward to 1 Samuel 17:1-58. Saul's king, older now, facing down the Philistines in battle in the story of David & Goliath...³*The Philistines occupied one hill & the Israelites another, with the valley between them.* Then Goliath, a huge hulk of a man decked out in armor, taunts the Israelites (v8-9)...*"Why do you come out & line up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not the servants of Saul? Choose a man & have him come down to me. 9If he is able to fight & kill me, we will become your subjects; but if I overcome him & kill him, you will become our subjects & serve us."*

The Israelites were terrified, no one would go out...enter David...not much more than a boy whose three older brothers were soldiers in the army of Israel...*"David went back & forth from Saul to tend his father's sheep at Bethlehem,"* (V15) taking news & supplies to his brothers. And...¹⁶*"For forty days the Philistine (Goliath) came forward every morning & evening & took his stand."* So, 80 times he's taunted Israel.

Then, Jesse, David's father, instructs him to take supplies & get news from his brothers. As David's talking with his brothers, Goliath steps out shouting usual defiance. David hears it & asks...*the men standing near him, "What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine & removes this disgrace from Israel? Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?"* (V26). They tell him...*"The king will give great wealth to the man who kills him. He will also give him his daughter in marriage & will exempt his family from taxes in Israel."* (V25).

³¹*What David said was overheard & reported to Saul, and Saul sent for him. 32David said to Saul, "Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go & fight him."* Saul says, you're just a kid! To which David replies describing how he's fought bears & lions protecting his father's sheep & Goliath will fall the same way since he's actually defying God. Saul says, *"Go, and the Lord be with you,"* then dresses him up in armor & David says...*"I can't go in these,"* and takes them off. ⁴⁰*Then he took his staff in his hand, chose five smooth stones from the stream, put them in the pouch of his shepherd's bag and, with his sling in his hand, approached the Philistine.*

Goliath looks him up & down...*"Am I a dog, that you come at me with sticks?"* David replies...*"You come against me with sword & spear & javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. 46This day the Lord will deliver you into my hands, and I'll strike you down & cut off your head. This very day I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds &*

the wild animals, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. 47All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give all of you into our hands." We know the rest. David sinks a stone into Goliath's head & drops him, cuts off his head, the Philistines run, the Israelites chase them down & win the battle. Good story!

Chris Bell describes the downfall of King Saul & how it relates to our own struggle with passivity in this story of David & Goliath. Saul was a large gifted man, called by God to lead Israel. He should exude the confidence David did in facing Goliath - should've been him defying Goliath on the battlefield, but it wasn't. "Saul for forty days...refused to go into that valley & fight. He was passive. As much as he looked *like* the leader...he refused to fight the battle with his name on it...When we refuse to fight the battles with our names on them, we always pay the price...for that passivity."¹

What do you procrastinate about? A chore you've been meaning to do? Homework? A project at work? Making an awkward phone call? A difficult conversation? Everyone procrastinates, but we're not usually facing down a giant on a battlefield in front of all to see! Yet, even the simplest situations feel gigantic at times!

Some procrastinate all the time, 20% of the population is regarded as chronic. "Procrastination is derived from the Latin verb *procrastinare* [meaning] to put off until tomorrow. But it's more than just a voluntary delay. Procrastination is also derived from the ancient word *akrasia* - [meaning to do] something against our better judgement." Meaning, it's in our better judgment to face our battles - it does something in us. Against his better judgment Saul shied away from this battle ceding authority to a boy, the first of many steps to his downfall! The choices we make in the battles we face determine & develop character & either glorify God or not. When we shy away from that which God puts in front of us, we hinder our spiritual growth & impede Christ's Glory.

Charlotte Lieberman in an article titled '*Why Do You Procrastinate? It Has Nothing To Do With Self-Control*', says... "Procrastination isn't a unique character flaw or a mysterious curse on your ability to manage time, but a way of coping with challenging emotions & negative moods induced by certain tasks - boredom, anxiety, insecurity, frustration, resentment, self-doubt & beyond...The particular nature of our aversion depends on the given task or situation. It may be due to something inherently unpleasant about the task itself - having to clean a dirty bathroom or organizing a long, boring spreadsheet for your boss. But it might also result from deeper feelings related to the task, such as self-doubt, low self-esteem, anxiety or insecurity." That's a nice humanistic way of looking at it & may be true. But for the Christian, procrastination in the things God puts before us translates to a lack of faith in an Almighty God who wins our battles. It's a hindrance to spiritual growth & impedes His glory in our lives.

¹ (Chris Bell, "How Christian Leaders Can Learn from the Story of King Saul," interview by Holly Tate, *Vanderbloemen Leadership Podcast*, August 28, 2019, 16:50-17:30, <https://podtail.com/fr/podcast/vanderbloemen-leadership-podcast/>).

We find ourselves putting off & ignoring responsibilities like Saul. 1 Samuel describes Saul as the best (1 Sam 9:2), anointed as king & given charge to protect the people from enemies (1 Sam 10:1-2). He *looked like & had all the characteristics of a king, even God's blessing & promises. But instead of protecting God's people, he ceded that responsibility to a young boy, David who defeated Goliath by faith (1 Sam 17:4-50). A boy who didn't look like a king at all, but acted like one nonetheless.*

Procrastination's about lying to yourself. Psychology's solution is to trick yourself to overcome it. According to an episode of [WellCast](#), there are 3 steps to get around procrastination. 1. **Eat an elephant one bite at a time.** Break the task down in bitesized chunks. 2. **Pick off the goblins before attacking the dragon.** Your brain is flooded with dopamines when you do something you like, so begin doing the little things you like on a project first. 3. **Ignore the Siren's Song.** In the epic poem *The Odyssey* by Homer, Ulysses is trying to get home on his ship. But this involves maneuvering through a straight of water where Sailors are often lured by beautiful creatures called Sirens. So Ulysses has himself tied to the mast & instructs his crew to plug their ears. So no matter how loud he yells for them to go toward the Sirens they can't hear & just keep sailing past. The lesson being to clear any distractions or temptations from your work space to stay on task. So break tasks into segments, do fun things first & clear distractions.

Good advice. Yet, for the Christian this goes beyond self-help, deeper into the matter of the disobedience of not listening to God translating to sin given we think we know better! The Christian response to procrastination isn't tricking yourself, rather it's being honest with yourself bringing about confession, faith & courage in God's strength!

I've sat with people facing difficult situations, usually simply a conversation. Such as quitting a job, or a confrontation. We all manifest anxiety differently. I know one person who had to have a difficult conversation with someone. For weeks we met & talked about how that conversation would go. It needed to happen given they were being abused in the relationship. They were anxiety ridden. Worry & sleepless nights plagued them constantly. They scratched themselves raw & shook in fear over a simple confrontation. Constant excuses were made as to why they couldn't do it. There was no getting around it. Their solution was to sell everything & move away, putting distance between them & the other person. A ridiculous solution to a simple conversation.

After much discussion, role playing, prayer & encouragement, they mustered the courage to have the conversation. When they came to tell me the result, what a change! No shaking or scratching, but smiling & laughing! Although it was difficult, it couldn't have gone better! The other person simply accepted their words! Weeks of worry, being stuck, nothing else occupying their minds, suddenly put in perspective! Relaxed now they could get on with life. They were more confident. A spiritual lesson in trusting God for the process & leaving the outcome to Him! God moved! Prayers answered!

Saul was a man who looked like he'd have integrity, but didn't. We're called to be people of integrity, not just people who say we have it. People of courage, not in ourselves, but

in Truth & God's Spirit who goes before us in battle. Applying 1 Corinthians 10:13...*No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.* You can handle it because God says you can. Jesus' promised to always be with you! Saul's temptation was to avoid, looking at the problem thinking, "I can't face this." He was right, but forgot, God can! In contrast, David, a young boy, saw that & acted on it. This was one of the many small steps of Saul's eventual undoing.

Back in 1 Samuel 8:4-5 the Israelites had told Samuel, "...install for us a king to govern us like all the other nations." They wanted a good leader, uncorrupt, with integrity. However, there were other cultural influences at play, the Israelites' intentions weren't completely pure. They already had a king in Yahweh instructing His people to be set apart making Him known to other peoples! God honored their request, it's what they wanted. God's worship is never coerced - they wanted to be governed like Canaan & other peoples, thinking it easier to have someone fight their battles for them.

Saul's root character flaw was self-exaltation & self-deception. Thinking too highly of himself clouded his vision of how large God was! Fear, when God calls for faith, is pride. He thinks he knows better than everyone else, including God. God says, "This is the right path." Saul says, "I know better!" Tragically, he wasn't aware of his sin. The story shows he's completely blind to his arrogance & believes he's in the right.² So, in 1 Samuel 8:7-9 God told Samuel...*"Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king. ⁸As they have done from the day I brought them up out of Egypt until this day, forsaking me & serving other gods, so they are doing to you. ⁹Now listen to them; but warn them solemnly & let them know what the king who will reign over them will claim as his rights."* So, it's not all Saul's fault, they asked for this & got it. They'd not been following God anyway, and they'd get a king who wouldn't fully follow God either & life proved more difficult.

Relaying through Samuel in 8:11-22 God describes how this earthly king will rule. He'll subjugate, take their land, money, sons, daughters & make them slaves. *Then Samuel said, ¹⁸"When that day comes, you will cry out for relief from the king you have chosen, but the Lord will not answer you in that day." ¹⁹But the people refused to listen to Samuel. "No!" they said. "We want a king over us. ²⁰Then we will be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us & to go out before us & fight our battles."* And...²²*The Lord answered, "Listen to them & give them a king."*

God's worship's never coerced, they get what they ask for thinking a king will fight their battles, but didn't. He ceded his authority to a young boy who did follow God! "Saul could be impulsive, acting unwisely....More than once, King Saul disobeyed God's instructions, thinking he knew better. God wants us to depend on him. When we don't & rely instead on our own strength & wisdom, [thinking we can avoid the battles he's called us into], we open ourselves to disaster. God wants us to go to Him for our sense of

² <https://bibleproject.com/blog/saul-tale-self-deception/>

worth. Saul enjoyed his popularity with the people, forgetting he'd been appointed king by God. Saul's first allegiance was to God, as is ours. We shouldn't forget, as Saul did, that we're all servants of God first."³

We could be critical of Saul, but honestly we often have more in common with Him than with David. Often running from our battles, hiding from responsibility & avoiding difficult situations. We think we know better than God, saying 'No' to what He's called us to, rather than saying, "You know best, I'll face this in obedience." Like Israel, we want to be like the world out there, not governed by a God who loves & knows best for us. We want a king to fight our battles & make faith safe & easy. God's ways seem too difficult when He calls us to courage in battle for His glory, instead of avoidance - the battle always comes back until we deal with it, and if we don't it's our undoing! Saul had 80 opportunities, but chose to avoid to his.

Saul's mistakes continue. In ch13 he's disobedient again bulldozing ahead without patiently waiting as told. In ch15 he disobeys again, but puts a spin on it to look spiritual saying he made sacrifices for the Lord & passes blame on others. **In 1 Samuel 15:22 Samuel responds...** *"Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings & sacrifices as much as in obeying the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice..."* Saul seems to repent at that moment, but again if we read between the lines He's more concerned about what people think saying in 1 Samuel 15:30... *"I have sinned. But please honor me before the elders of my people & before Israel..."* Constantly working out of his own strength, avoiding battles, seeking approval from people, lessons he never seems to learn.

Very different from when David sins, then repents & prays in Psalm 51:10 *Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.* [some translations say 'renew a spirit of integrity in me'].

Saul's eventual jealousy of David blinds him to what God had given him. When we compare ourselves with others, we become confused. We want what they have instead of trusting in God to fight our battles. We stray from God trying to get what we want on our own. Life with God has direction & purpose. Life without Him is meaningless & unnecessarily difficult. God expects total obedience, not partial obedience with excuses.

Change is hindered when we put off responsibility. We can't allow procrastination to hinder God's glory through our spiritual growth. Instead of avoiding difficulties, conversations, or responsibilities God places before us, we can choose obedience. We know He goes before us & doesn't give us more than we can handle. Passivity is fear & lack of faith, having dire effects on spiritual growth. It stands in the way of that to which God calls, would glorify Him & which would otherwise grow us.

Let's choose faith & obedience over fear & procrastination!

³ https://bibleproject.com/blog/saul-tale-self-deception/#ref-1_samuel_8:11-22