

A Courageous Heart

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1 Samuel 17

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The other day I was talking to a friend of mine in ministry. Now, this friend is a new, young pastor who's leading an old church that desperately needs to make some changes. He was talking to me about a kind of battle that he is facing as a leader. Someone in the church is opposed to his leadership, and they are trying to make trouble between him and his wife and another couple that's connected to the church. They're trying to stir up problems, and he was wondering how he should respond. Should he confront the person and tell them to stop gossiping? Should he show this person grace and overlook the issue? Should he just ignore the person and work with the other couple and make sure everything is OK? He didn't know exactly how to respond, but he did know one thing: It's a battle! He's involved in a spiritual struggle!

As we talked, we discussed other battles that he is facing as a leader. We talked about the hard work of his ministry and how it can be a battle for him to find balance between his work and his family. We talked about the battles a pastor faces, kind of against his own weakness. Pastors face temptations. We face desires to avoid conflict, fear of man. We talked about the battle for his people's hearts, as he tries to lead them away from thinking only about themselves and toward sharing the gospel with those around them. That is going to be a battle!

So we talked about battles. As we talked about them, I was reminded of a simple fact. There are times when God calls his people into a battle. This is true of anyone who belongs to God. If you are a Christian, if you follow Jesus, there are going to be times in your life when God calls you to stand up and do something hard for Him. He's going to call you into a battle. It may be a battle to stand up against something that's not right, a rule or a system, a way of operating that is hurting people. It may be a battle, kind of against ourselves. Maybe God is calling us to change something, to start doing something or stop doing something, and it's a battle. It may seem to be a battle against another person. Someone may oppose God or what God has called us to do, and we have to figure out how to respond. There are times when God calls his people to battle!

THE BATTLE

Today we are going to look at the story of a battle. This is definitely one of the most famous battles in all of history, a battle almost everyone has heard of. Can anyone guess what battle I'm talking about? The Battle of Hastings! Just kidding It's David and Goliath! Today we are going to look at the story of the battle of David and Goliath! By the way, did you know David was the best babysitter in the Bible? Rocked Goliath to sleep! Just Kidding! We're going to look at the story of David and Goliath! Let me invite you to turn in your Bibles to 1 Samuel 17.

Today as we look at this story, we're going to do two things. First, we're going to look at the story and see what actually happened! It's a great story! But fair warning. It's long, like super long! Second, we're going to see what this story teaches us about the battles that God calls us

to! We'll see what God wants us to learn from this well-known story. But before we do that, we need to ask for God's help. Let's pray.

Our story today is long! It's the longest of David's battle stories. It has the longest speech by a bad guy, and it's almost sixty verses long! So we're going to divide this amazing story into five chunks: the Bad Guy, the Boy, the Battle Plan, the Boasting and the Beating. See what I did there - five chunks that all begin with the letter "B." Our story starts with:

The Bad Guy

So as our story begins, two big armies, the army of Israel (God's people) and the army of the Philistines, are camped out on two big mountains with a big valley between them. This valley (low flat area) was right on the border between Israel and the land of the Philistines. It was a perfect place for the Philistines to invade Israel, and that's exactly what the Philistines had in mind. They wanted to invade Israel and make Israel become their slaves. Israel was trying to stop them. That's why both armies were at that valley!

Now in a normal battle between two armies, one army attacks and the battle begins. But this was no normal battle. The Philistines had a special weapon. His name was Goliath, and he was a bad dude. Look at:

And there came out from the camp of the Philistines a champion named Goliath of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span. He had a helmet of bronze on his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail, and the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of bronze. And he had bronze armor on his legs, and a javelin of bronze slung between his shoulders. The shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron. And his shield-bearer went before him.

1 Samuel 17:4-7

Now that may not sound too scary to us, because we don't use cubits, and spans, and shekels. In fact, we don't even use suits of armor any more! So to us, it doesn't sound like that big of a deal! But to Israel in Goliath 's day, this would have sounded terrifying!

First of all, there was Goliath's sheer size! He was like Davis! Davis, how tall are you? Oh no, that's not near tall enough! Our passage says "Goliath was six cubits and a span!" This is a cubit and this is a span. When you put them together, that's over nine feet tall! Now they recently found an ancient manuscript of the Bible in Qumran that says he was four cubits and a span which is more like seven feet tall, but either way, Goliath was a big dude!

He had all kinds of weapons, the best weapons available at that time. You have to realize this was at a time when Israel didn't have hardly any weapons. Just four chapters ago, the Bible tells us about a time when 3,000 Israelites went to war, and they only had two swords! So weapons were a big deal, and Goliath had everything! He had a sword, a spear, a javelin, and he had

armor: a bronze helmet, a coat of mail that look like a snake and weighed 125 pounds, a big shield and a guy to carry it, and he even had shin guards!

Now with all that armor, Goliath probably couldn't move around very fast. But you know what? He didn't have to! He was like a human tank! He had the best weapons available, and he was covered from head to toe in armor except for one little spot, right here. Goliath wasn't just a bad guy. He was a Bad Guy's Bad Guy!

Now every morning and evening, Goliath would do something that drove Israel crazy! He would go down near the stream bed in the middle of the valley, and he would yell to Israel "There's no need for a big battle. Let's just have a little contest. I'm a Philistine. You guys are Israelites. Just pick an Israelite to fight me one on one, winner take all. If he beats me, I will be your slaves. But if I beat him, you will be our slaves!" Now that's kind of silly! It's like Michael Jordan saying "I don't know. Let's just settle this on the basketball court!" It's not very fair! So the Israelites did not know how to respond. Nobody wanted to fight the human tank, so they just sat there for forty straight days listening to the Bad Guy. So that's the Bad Guy. But there's more. There's not just the Bad Guy, there's also:

The Boy

David, the Son of Jesse, David, the main character of our summer family worship series, came to the Israelite camp during this time. So this happened sometime (months or years) after David was anointed as king, some time after God's Spirit had rushed on David and filled him. This happened when David was probably 14-18 years old (no older than 18).

David came to the Israelite camp, not because he wanted to fight, but just because he was obeying his father. Jesse had told David to drop off a care package at the Israelite camp and to make sure that his three older brothers (who were fighting in the war) were OK, so David obeyed. But while he was visiting with his brothers, something happened that David could hardly believe. First, David heard something he couldn't believe he was hearing:

As David talked with his brothers, behold, the champion, the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name, came up out of the ranks of the Philistines and spoke the same words as before. And David heard him.

- 1 Samuel 17:23

David heard this idol-worshipper, this Philistine, challenge God's army! He could hardly believe what he was hearing!

But secondly, David saw something that was even harder for him to believe. When Goliath talked like that, all the Israelite soldiers fled! They ran away! David couldn't believe it. How could the idol-worshipping human tank come out and defy an entire army with God on their side and have them run away? He couldn't believe it, so he went from one soldier to another asking a question:

And David said to the men who stood by him, "What shall be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?"

- 1 Samuel 17:26

David asked what the reward for killing Goliath was. Now David was asking that question not because he wanted the reward and not because he was making trouble (which is what his oldest brother thought). Rather, David was asking that question because he couldn't believe that nobody was standing up to Goliath! Not only had this Philistine insulted God's people (which was enough for David to want to fight him), but there was a huge reward for the guy who stood up to Goliath. If you killed Goliath, you got riches. You got to marry the king's daughter and your whole family didn't have to pay taxes, like ever! So David kept going from person to person asking "Do you not know what this Philistine said? Do you not know there's a big reward?" Finally, King Saul heard about David and all his questions, and Saul called David to his tent to ask him what the deal was. Saul's tent was where he and David developed:

The Battle Plan

When David got to Saul's tent, Saul asked him "What's with all the questions?" David told Saul "We should not be afraid of this guy. He's not even that big. He's only six cubits, OK. He's big, but God is on our side!" "In fact," David said "I'll fight him myself! I'm not afraid!" Now Saul was not sure about that at all. David wasn't even old enough to be in the army, and Goliath had been a soldier since he was in diapers! Saul wasn't sure about this at all, but there was something Saul didn't know. God had been training David! Remember how God's Spirit had rushed on David and stayed with him when he was anointed? Well one of the things God's Spirit had been doing was teaching David how to stand up to big bullies. Look at:

But David said to Saul, "Your servant has been keeping sheep for his father. And when there came a lion, or a bear, and took a lamb from the flock, I went after him and struck him and delivered it out of his mouth. And if he arose against me, I caught him by his beard and struck him and killed him. Your servant has struck down both lions and bears, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, for he has defied the armies of the living God." And David said, "The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine."

- 1 Samuel 17:34-37

So David killed bears and lions in hand to hand combat. Now I don't know a lot about Asian Brown Bears, but I know a little bit about lions, and I'm going to tell you something: That's NOT NORMAL! A big male lion weighs over 400 pounds. It can reach twelve feet standing on its hind legs! That is not a critter that normal people want to play with! It's weird! So why has David been doing this? God has been teaching him how to stand up to bullies. That's what Goliath is. A bully. Anyone who can stand up to a lion has a pretty good chance against a seven to nine giant. Saul knows this, so he lets David answer the challenge.

BUT they still need a battle plan! So Saul has an idea. He tries to help David out by matching Goliath's weapons.:

Then Saul clothed David with his armor. He put a helmet of bronze on his head and clothed him with a coat of mail, and David strapped Saul's sword over his armor.

- 1 Samuel 17:38-39

Hmm, so far, so good. David has good armor. There's only two problems with it. First, it doesn't fit! Remember Saul was head and shoulders above everyone in Israel and David's still growing! So look at:

And David tried in vain to go, for he had not tested them. Then David said to Saul, "I cannot go with these, for I have not tested (not used to) them."

- 1 Samuel 17:38

The armor doesn't fit! That's the first problem. But there's another problem. These aren't the weapons God taught David to use. God didn't train David with chainmail and swords made by a blacksmith. God trained David with things God had made: Sticks and stones! Look at:

So David put them off. Then he took his staff in his hand and chose five smooth stones from the brook and put them in his shepherd's pouch. His sling was in his hand, and he approached the Philistine.

- 1 Samuel 17:40

So David had a staff, which was like a club of hard wood (that was his stick), and he had five stones from the streambed in the middle of the valley. Now these were not little, like superball sized stones Archaeologists have found piles of them in Israel they were about this big (so think of getting hit with a cueball). So he has a stick and some stones, and David had a sling which was not a little slingshot. Rather, it would have looked like this. This has a loop on one side for your middle finger then a leather pouch then it has a knot on the other side to hold between your thumb and first finger. You put the stone in it you swing it around and someone who knows what they are doing (not me) can sling a stone about 100-150 miles per hour. Imagine getting hit with a 150 mile per hour cueball! I saw a guy on YouTube throwing three ounce pieces of lead completely through 3/8" plywood!

These are serious weapons, but they are not traditional weapons! They are unexpected! They are not what armies would use in this kind of battle at all! But that's the battle plan. David is going to use what God has given him.

So we have 1) the Bad Guy, 2) the Boy, and (3) the Battle Plan. Now as David and Goliath finally come together and see each other, there is:

The Boasting

No battle is complete without the trash-talking, right? This is no exception! Look at what Goliath says when he finally sees who he's going up against:

And the Philistine said to David, "Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?" And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. The Philistine said to David, "Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and to the beasts of the field."

- 1 Samuel 17:43-44

Goliath insults David's weapons. Calls it a stick. He threatens David. Says he's going to feed him to the vultures. But then Goliath makes a very big mistake! Goliath blasphemes! He curses David by his Philistine gods. That's blasphemy! Insulting God! The Old Testament Law had a very clear punishment for blasphemy. Can anyone guess what it was? Stoning. Goliath is about to be rocked to sleep! But first, David is going to do a little trash talking of his own. Look at:

Then David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head. And I will give the dead bodies of the host of the Philistines this day to the birds of the air and to the wild beasts of the earth,

- 1 Samuel 17:45-46a

Now that's a pretty big boast! David is saying he's going to chop off Goliath's head and feed his entire army to the vultures. That's a pretty big boast for a guy with no sword and only five stones! But notice something. Notice why David said he's going to have victory:

"So that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the LORD saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the LORD's, and he will give you into our hand."

- 1 Samuel 17:46b-47

David's confidence isn't in his weaponry, and it's not in his strength. It's in his God. Goliath has defied the Lord God Almighty, the Maker of heaven and earth, the God of Angel Armies, the God who swallows entire armies with oceans and turns cities into rubble at the sound of a trumpet. Goliath has defied Yahweh! So there's only one piece left to this story and, unfortunately, for Goliath it's called:

The Beating

David and Goliath have reached that place where the trash talk is done and the armor is strapped on and there's nothing left but the fight, and the fight didn't last long. The battle is done in three-and-a-half verses! Goliath gets up and lumbers toward David. He's probably thinking that David is going to run around and try to wear him out. But look what happens:

When the Philistine arose and came and drew near to meet David, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine. And David put his hand in his bag and took out a stone and slung it and struck the Philistine on his forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell on his face to the ground.

- 1 Samuel 17:48-49

Whoa! But David's not done! He has a promise to keep. So he runs to the Philistine, takes Goliath's sword out of the scabbard, because he doesn't have a sword of his own, and does exactly what he said he was going to do. He chops off Goliath's head! Then look what happens next:

When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled. And the men of Israel and Judah rose with a shout and pursued the Philistines as far as Gath and the gates of Ekron, so that the wounded Philistines fell on the way from Shaaraim as far as Gath and Ekron. And the people of Israel came back from chasing the Philistines, and they plundered their camp.

- 1 Samuel 17:51-53

This was a serious beating! The Lord of Hosts gave David victory. God's provision God's training of David and David's unwavering trust in God came together to give David a courageous heart and a great victory! Everything David said came true. He defeated Goliath. He chopped off his head (even though he didn't have a sword!), and the bodies of the army of the Philistines were given to the birds that day. That's the story of David and Goliath: The Bad Guy, the Boy, the Battle Plan, the Boasting and the Beating.

So that's the story. But now that we've seen the story, we need to ask the same question that we asked last week, the same question we should ask every time we read a story in the Bible and that is: How does this relate to you and me? What does God want us to learn from this? What is the point that the Bible is making from this story? Is the point that God will help you kill all the giants in your life, so you'll have victory over any battle we face no matter what it is? I don't think that's exactly what this passage is teaching. Is the point of the story an allegory? Does Goliath represent sin, and David represent Jesus? Is that what this is really all about? I don't think that's the point. Jesus wasn't born when this was written.

So what is the point? Well, I think David actually tells us what the point is. In verses 46-47 right in the middle of the "Boasting" section of the story, Goliath says "I'm going to feed you to the wild animals!" and David says something important. He says "You come at me with a sword, and spear, and a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of Hosts." David says "God's

going to give us victory over you and the entire Philistine army.” But remember why David says God is going to do that. Look at:

So that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the LORD saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the LORD's, and he will give you into our hand.”

- 1 Samuel 17:46-47

I think that's the point of this story. It's about people knowing God and trusting God. To put it in other terms, I think The lesson this passage is teaching us is this:

THERE IS A GOD WHO FIGHTS IN THE BATTLES HE CALLS HIS PEOPLE TO AND HE DOES IT WITH HIS OWN WEAPONS.

Let me say that again: There is a God who fights in the battles He calls his people to and He does it with his own weapons. Now, let's just think about that for a minute. It kind of has three parts:

There is a God.

Sometimes we know we're God's people, but we act as if God doesn't actually exist. When we're facing opposition, we add up our resources and our opposition's resources (like Saul did), and it doesn't look good. We say to ourselves “There's no way this can have a positive outcome. There's no way I'll win.” We need to remember there is a God, and He is at work for His good purpose in our lives:

We know that in all things, God works for the good of those who love him, for those who are called according to his purpose.

- Romans 8:28

We should not face the battles in our life as though it were only up to us and our resources. God can give victory when he desires. There is a God.

God fights in the battles He calls his people to.

The point of this story is not that every time someone gets in our way, God is going to clean house. This isn't about our blocked goals or our wounded pride or our angry friends who are goading us into a fight. This isn't even about us righting every injustice that we see in the world. This story is specifically about the battles that God calls His people to. In Israel, the battle was all about God's calling. When Israel was behaving, they never went into battle on their own. They always asked God through a prophet or priest “Should we go against this enemy? How should we do it?” Always! That's the way David did it too. If you read his story when he went into battle, he always asked God “Is this a battle you want me to fight?” And sometimes God

said “No. Leave it alone. This battle is not for you.” We can see from this that God doesn't want us to fight every battle that we might engage in.

But If we think about this battle, we can see that God specifically called David to it. David didn't just pick a fight with Goliath. David was at the camp because he was obeying his Father, and God's Spirit led David into this moment. I mean think about it. This battle was tailor-made to make people notice David and to raise him into leadership. The odds were crazy. Goliath had all the size, all the armor, all the weapons David had sticks and stones. People could see David's courage, and the spotlight was on David. Do you know why there are so many details in this account? Because there were so many eyewitnesses. Nobody else was fighting. The whole army was watching David! This battle isn't something they heard about. It was something they all saw. That was exactly what David needed to rise to power. David could have killed five Goliaths in a big battle, and he wouldn't have gotten one-tenth of the notoriety he got from this one battle. The spotlight was on David! And David literally led Israel into battle. The other soldiers wouldn't go. Saul wouldn't go. David steps in, and once he does his part, they follow and they rout the Philistines. David led them into battle! The point is this battle is something that God called David to.

Sometimes God calls us to battle. Sometimes we face someone who wants to stop God's purposes in our life or someone who wants to stop us from accomplishing God's purposes in this world, and God calls us to battle. It's not our ego that calls us to battle. It's not our frustration that calls us to battle. It's not our friends that call us to battle it's God. It's about his purposes and his honor. We try to avoid conflict, but sometimes, we have to stand up and make a choice.

1) There is a God, and 2) He fights in the battles he calls his people to. Lastly:

God uses his own weapons.

David tells us that God doesn't use sword and spear, and it's true. God rarely uses a positive balance of the weapons we would expect him to use. When the time comes that God calls us to do battle, we can't just add up our typical resources and their typical resources. It's not “I have this many friends, and they have that many friends.” It's not “I have this much evidence, and they have that much.” It's not “I have this much power, and they have that much.”

If God calls us into a battle, whether it's against a situation or a battle against your own weaknesses or a battle against someone who is blocking God's purposes, it's never about our resources. If God called you to the battle, it's about his resources and the way he uses them. He's not going to use the weapons we would use. He'll use his own weapons, and he'll use his own weapons for the reason David gives us in this passage: So that everyone will know there's a God and so that God's people will know that the battle belongs to the Lord.

1) There is a God, 2) He fights in the battles he calls his people to, and 3) He uses his own weapons. That's what the story of David and Goliath is all about.