

March 13, 2016
Sunday Morning Service
Series: The Life of David
Community Baptist Church
643 S. Suber Road
Greer, SC 29650
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REAL FAITH IN THE NAME OF THE LORD IS VALIANT 1 Samuel 17

The David and Goliath story is one of the most beloved stories in the Bible. Indeed, it is one of the great narratives in the history of humanity. Even unregenerate secularists do not flinch to describe a competition or game as “A David and Goliath match up.” The world still marvels at the wonderful story about the little shepherd boy who went after the huge, ugly giant with five smooth little pebbles from a brook and his trusty slingshot.

There is not much about that opinion of the story that is accurate. The real story is not David’s bravery, his skill with a sling, or his indomitable bravado. The real story is that this young man, who God assessed as “the man after His own heart,” was just that. It wasn’t so much that David was brave, courageous, and self-confident. Quite the opposite. Rather, when David saw that someone had the audacity to defy the God whom he loved, he was going to do something about it regardless of the fact that the guy was 10 feet tall. David enjoyed such a relationship with God that he confidently walked toward big, ugly Goliath with his sling in his hand believing with all his heart that God is able to deliver the victory to His people for His own glory. The challenge of this story is not for us to be brave or self-confident in the face of trouble. The challenge is for us to trust God to the extent David trusted Him.

The Enemy Wants to Fight (vv.1-30).

Sometimes the enemy looks quite impressive (vv.1-11). *Now the Philistines gathered their armies for battle. And they were gathered at Socoh, which belongs to Judah, and encamped between*

Socoh and Azekah, in Ephes-dammim (v.1). The text reveals that the enemy in David’s day was encroaching where they did not belong. The Philistine nation had been located in an area along the Mediterranean coast for centuries. God gave this land to His people and expected them to occupy it by running the enemy out. But like our battle with sin, God’s people often did not succeed in defeating the enemy.

To make matters worse, the Philistine army moved east between the towns of Socoh and Azekah—which area belonged to Judah. Isn’t that just like sin? Sin and temptation always encroach where they do not belong. God created us in perfection to enjoy fellowship with Him. But sin has taken over God’s creation and is in us where it does not belong. How are we supposed to deal with it?

God’s people showed some resistance to the enemy. *And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered, and encamped in the Valley of Elah, and drew up in line of battle against the Philistines (v.2).* It appears that very quickly the confrontation became a standoff. *And the Philistines stood on the mountain on the one side, and Israel stood on the mountain on the other side, with a valley between them (v.3).*

At the outset, it seems easy to predict who would win the battle. The enemy depended on an unusual warrior. *(4) And there came out from the camp of the Philistines a champion named Goliath of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span. (5) 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. (6) And he had bronze armor on his legs, and a javelin of bronze slung between his shoulders. (7) 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 (vv.4-7).*

Goliath was not only a large man but he had a large opinion of himself. *(8) He stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, “Why have you come out to draw up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not servants of Saul? Choose a man for yourselves, and let him come down to me. (9) If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will be your servants. But if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall be our servants and serve us.” (10) And the Philistine said, “I defy the ranks of Israel this day. Give me a man, that we may*

fight together” (vv.8-10). In his boast, Goliath illustrated his spiritual father well. He was definitely of his father the devil, as Jesus told the Pharisees. Satan, too, is a braggart who was not afraid to raise himself up against His creator. All of us who are born in the sin of Adam have the same attitude and commit the same kinds of sin. And so after we are born again and become God’s people, we will have to deal with sinful braggarts who are a very real enemy to peace and the gospel.

Are we dismayed at the formidable sight of the enemy? God’s people were. *When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid (v.11).* The enemy, represented by Goliath, was huge, formidable, and there was no human way to beat it. Like sin. Sin ought to seem frightening because its consequences are eternal. Sometimes the enemy manifests itself in your life as a persistent sin that you hate and long to be free of. Sometimes it is a certain fear or panic of real or imagined possibilities. Sometimes it is a person whether a co-worker or a national leader who causes fear.

Always these are matters of sin. If we truly trust God, we do not fear nor are we dismayed. God desires for us to walk in fellowship with Him and rejoice in how He delivers us. In fact, Paul succinctly stated God’s standard as: *“For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin” (Romans 14:23).* We cannot hope to win the battle if we do not trust the Lord.

Sometimes the response of God’s people to the enemy looks unimpressive (vv.12-30). *(12) Now David was the son of an Ephrathite of Bethlehem in Judah, named Jesse, who had eight sons. In the days of Saul the man was already old and advanced in years. (13) The three oldest sons of Jesse had followed Saul to the battle. And the names of his three sons who went to the battle were Eliab the firstborn, and next to him Abinadab, and the third Shammah. (14) David was the youngest. The three eldest followed Saul, (15) but David went back and forth from Saul to feed his father’s sheep at Bethlehem (vv.12-15).*

Now Jesse’s family comes to the forefront in the story. As we know from chapter sixteen also, he had eight sons. The three oldest sons went to battle, the five youngest stayed home. And the youngest of all, David, was the shepherd and the messenger boy.

Because David ran supplies to his brothers he had opportunity to experience the enemy’s taunting. *(16) For forty days the Philistine came forward and took his stand, morning and evening. (17) And Jesse said to David his son, “Take for your brothers an ephah of this parched grain, and these ten loaves, and carry them quickly to the camp to your brothers. (18) Also take these ten cheeses to the commander of their thousand. See if your brothers are well, and bring some token from them.” (19) Now Saul and they and all the men of Israel were in the valley of Elah, fighting with the Philistines. (20) And David rose early in the morning and left the sheep with a keeper and took the provisions and went, as Jesse had commanded him. And he came to the encampment as the host was going out to the battle line, shouting the war cry. (21) And Israel and the Philistines drew up for battle, army against army. (22) And David left the things in charge of the keeper of the baggage and ran to the ranks and went and greeted his brothers. (23) As he talked with them, 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.*

How would you respond if you were David? How do you respond to people who mock God, take His name in vain, boldly offend God? How do you respond to sin that boldly mocks God’s righteousness in your own life? Hopefully we do not respond like the men of Israel responded to Goliath. *All the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him and were much afraid (v.24).*

David, in contrast, was convinced that something should be done. He heard the chatter of the day. *And the men of Israel said, “Have you seen this man who has come up? Surely he has come up to defy Israel. And the king will enrich the man who kills him with great riches and will give him his daughter and make his father’s house free in Israel” (v.25).* His chief concern was that someone dared to defy God. *(26) 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?” (27) And the people answered him in the same way, “So shall it be done to the man who kills him” (vv.26-27).*

While David was genuinely offended at the giant's defying God, his brothers misunderstood him. (28) *Now Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spoke to the men. And Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, "Why have you come down? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your presumption and the evil of your heart, for you have come down to see the battle."* (29) *And David said, "What have I done now? Was it not but a word?"* (30) *And he turned away from him toward another, and spoke in the same way, and the people answered him again as before (vv.28-30).*

Why didn't they get upset about the pagan man's defiance against their God? They were not men after God's heart. We could probably debate whether they were even believers in God. They were most likely common sinners who had to assume that David also was responding like a common sinner. Common sinners will never understand your concern about sin and sinners who defy God. They will always wonder why you are getting stirred up about normal, acceptable practices.

Man's Ways are Not God's Ways (vv.31-39).

A young man's faith is a great weapon (vv.31-37). Faith is confident of victory. David was confident that God could defeat the enemy through him. (31) *When the words that David spoke were heard, they repeated them before Saul, and he sent for him. (32) And David said to Saul, "Let no man's heart fail because of him. Your servant will go and fight with this Philistine"* (vv.31-32).

A man whose confidence is in the flesh is not so sure of a believer's confidence in God. *And Saul said to David, "You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him, for you are but a youth, and he has been a man of war from his youth"* (v.33).

But the doubt of others notwithstanding, proven faith is strong faith. God's deliverance in the past makes faith strong. (34) *But David said to Saul, "Your servant used to keep sheep for his father. And when there came a lion, or a bear, and took a lamb from the flock, (35) 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. (36) 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." (37) *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"* (vv.34-37).

David helps us learn that if we always run from difficulty, we will never experience growth in faith. Likewise, if we must control circumstances, we will never learn how to trust God. If we only engage comfortable situations, we will never learn God's amazing grace. Don't even think about attacking the giant until you have found God faithful in killing the lion and the bear.

David-kind of confidence in God should be convincing. *And Saul said to David, "Go, and the LORD be with you!"* (v.37b). And as we go, we should learn early on that the weapons of the flesh are useless (vv.38-39). (38) *Then Saul clothed David with his armor. He put a helmet of bronze on his head and clothed him with a coat of mail, (39) and David strapped his sword over his armor. And he 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 them."* So David put them off (vv.38-39).

Proven methods are not always best methods. The best warriors wore the best equipment. This was King Saul's personal armor. It was better than anything the other men in the field of battle had. Saul, being a man after the flesh, had great confidence in this armor.

But David's faith was in the Lord. He did not kill the bear and lion using Saul's weapons. His most effective weapon was not physical but was faith in the living God. Nor are our weapons the weapons of flesh. Paul explained our advantage in armament to the Christians in Corinth. *For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete"* (2 Corinthians 10:3-6).

The weapons of the flesh are popular philosophies, entertainment, the Hollywood/Broadway model, or Wall Street successful businesses model. Our weapons are super-human because

they flow from divine power. Our weapons are directed at arguments and opinions that are raised against God. Our weapons take every thought into captivity to Christ. The intent of our weapons is the punishment of disobedience which means that God will destroy every thought, philosophy, action that is contrary to the truth of His Word. That takes revenge out of our hands and leaves it with God, whose Word we trust implicitly. Genuine faith in God trusts what God says in His Word. Therefore, faith still stands on the Bible. Know the Bible – Have faith!

The Name of the Lord of Hosts is Very Impressive (vv.40-58).

God uses the weak things to confound the mighty (vv.40-51a). One of the weak things God has used to accomplish His will for centuries is great sermons. A chief trait of great sermons is that they exalt God (vv.40-47). But rarely are they as short as David's sermon!

The man of God and the enemy engaged the battle. (40) *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. (41) And the Philistine moved forward and came near to David, with his shield-bearer in front of him (vv.40-41).* This picture is not unlike you and me engaging a sinner. We are called and equipped to do battle with the Word of God as our weapon. But the enemy does not always come to our house, our church building, or our work place in order to do battle. We need to go out and find him or her.

For David the enemy was extremely obvious. He was the guy standing on the other side of the brook who mocked the man of God. He disdained his appearance. *And when the Philistine looked and saw David, he disdained him, for he was but a youth, ruddy and handsome in appearance(v.42).* That sounds so much like the worldly-wise person who claims, "You Christians are so out of touch." Granted sometimes the weak things of this actually do look weak and backward.

The arrogant sinner Goliath also exalted himself and appealed to his make-believe gods. *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 (v.43).* Goliath's argument was that he deserved a

better opponent. His size and deportment had garnered many accolades from peers. He was pretty impressed and it appears he took his lord's name in vain to curse David. He promised to destroy the man of God. *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" (v.44).*

Those were the kind of words prophets like Jeremiah would hear as his fellow Israelites threaten to kill him. So because of such push back God encouraged Ezekiel. *The LORD said, "And whether they hear or refuse to hear (for they are a rebellious house) they will know that a prophet has been among them. And you, son of man, be not afraid of them, nor be afraid of their words, though briars and thorns are with you and you sit on scorpions. Be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, for they are a rebellious house. And you shall speak my words to them, whether they hear or refuse to hear, for they are a rebellious house (Ezekiel 2:5-7).*

David, the humble servant of the Lord, is presented as the polar opposite of the arrogant, boasting pagan. David exalted God in his sermon to Goliath (vv.45-48). Essentially he challenged the champion of the pagans to know his real Judge. Though Goliath invoked the names of his gods, his trust was really in himself. He had wreaked so much havoc with his weapons that he came to trust them. But this time the sinner was up against the LORD of hosts. *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" (v.45).*

The title "Lord of hosts" means that God is the captain of not only Israel's pathetic army but of all the angels in heaven. A guy cannot be very bright to defy the LORD of hosts. But most people do just that most of the time. How do we respond to them? Too many of the LORD's people cower in fear hoping and praying that Jesus will return and deliver us from these arrogant, defying enemies. Worse is when people who claim to belong to the LORD of hosts actually reshape their lives to be acceptable to the enemy.

Better for us to have David's confidence. He had fullest confidence that Goliath's eternal Judge was going to use him the humble shepherd boy to accomplish His will. (46) *"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, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, (47) 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" (vv.46-47).

David seems a bit forward himself, doesn't he? Yes, but his confidence was not in himself but in the God he served. The true servant of God desires for the whole world to know that God is in charge. We truly yearn for God's people to be encouraged to know that God saves according to His own plan.

Well, miracle of miracles, God did what David said He would (vv.48-51a). The battle was not nearly as exciting as David's short sermon. *(48) When the Philistine arose and came and drew near to meet David, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine. (49) 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.* According to evidence from that day, it seems likely that David put a rock about the size of a tennis ball in the sling. He whipped the sling around his head a few times and let the rock fly at somewhere between 100-150 m.p.h. Not surprisingly it found its mark and the giant was history.

David took the final act of demonstrating victory by slicing the braggart's head from his body. *(50) So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and struck the Philistine and killed him. There was no sword in the hand of David. (51a) Then David ran and stood over the Philistine and took his sword and drew it out of its sheath and killed him and cut off his head with it.*

The results of God's victory were obvious and instructive (vv.51b-58). A new day was dawning (vv.51-54). For many years the Philistines harassed the citizens of Israel. Now they were on the run and would be until they were annihilated. *(51b) When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled. (52) 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. (53) And the*

people of Israel came back from chasing the Philistines, and they plundered their camp (vv.51b-53).

The name Philistine is used to identify a number of pagan groups who lived between Jerusalem and the Mediterranean Sea. David essentially subdued them in His reign and finally Babylon wiped them out. David served notice that God was changing the political landscape. *And David took the head of the Philistine and brought it to Jerusalem, but he put his armor in his tent (v.54).* At the time the Jebusites occupied Jerusalem. That was a bit of an embarrassment because Joshua had given Jerusalem to both the tribe of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin. Neither had been able to drive out the enemy for good. David served notice that the city of God's choice, the place where He would be pleased to dwell, was going to be taken over.

In similar fashion every time we share the gospel, preach the gospel, we are putting the enemy on notice that one day God is going to culminate His plan to redeem all creation for Himself. Give the enemy fair warning so they will be compelled to become God's friend.

Does it appear strange that in the aftermath of the victory Saul asked, "Who was that boy?" (vv.55-58). The ending of this narrative is a bit confusing in light of what we have already studied. Samuel anointed David to be king. Saul hired David to play soothing music for him. Saul made David his armor-bearer. So why didn't Saul know who David was? *(55) As soon as Saul saw David go out against the Philistine, he said to Abner, the commander of the army, "Abner, whose son is this youth?" And Abner said, "As your soul lives, O king, I do not know." (56) And the king said, "Inquire whose son the boy is." (57) And as soon as David returned from the striking down of the Philistine, Abner took him, and brought him before Saul with the head of the Philistine in his hand. (58) And Saul said to him, "Whose son are you, young man?" And David answered, "I am the son of your servant Jesse the Bethlehemite" (vv. 55-58).*

The text makes it clear that Saul's question was not "Who is that boy?" Saul knew David to a fairly good extent (see 16:21). Saul's question was, "Whose son is this youth?" He was now searching David's pedigree. Depending on what happened in the near future (i.e. success against Goliath), David might be in line to marry the

king's daughter. Was he from a worthy family? Think about the scandals in history when royals desired to marry commoners. Also, was David's whole family as faithful to the Lord as David was?

Goliath was an unusual enemy. He was huge and indomitable. He was loud and boastful – the kind of enemy everyone wanted to defeat. He is a perfect picture of sin and the Tempter. David was an unusual servant of God. He possessed extreme faith in God. He learned this faith through past experiences. He acted according to His faith. We face an enemy that has taken down countless victims throughout history. Are we afraid and look for an easier road? Do we know the promises God put for us in His Word? Do we trust God's promises? Do we act like we trust God?