

David, Our Champion

1 Sam. 17

INTRODUCTION

We'll be focusing the message this morning on perhaps the most familiar story in the Old Testament. If not the most familiar, it is certainly one of the most loved – especially by anyone who happened to ever be a young boy sitting in a Sunday School class. Yes, I'm talking about that classic adventure story of David and Goliath. I'm sure that several windows have taken a beating thanks to some rambunctious lad testing out his self-made slingshot. *"But Mom, I just wanted to be like David!"*

We laugh to think about such re-enactments. But it is in living out the story that we continue to find this simple story so meaningful in our lives. Who doesn't have a "Giant" facing them today? Who hasn't had to face up to a situation they dreaded? And many of us have seen our God come through for us, too.

But before we go too far down this path, let's stop and think here. Just like the little boy is a bit foolish to think his ill-aimed throw will match David's, so too we are a bit presumptuous to find ourselves as the "new David" in the story. Why aren't we as eager to find ourselves as a member of Saul's army, cowering behind any cover he can find? Or could we be someone who already deserted the battle scene, before it was even fought? Or what about someone on the other side?

And who hasn't faced a great battle and felt the giant beating him down, only to ultimately walk away in defeat. Practicing that slingshot throw can be wearying. Trying to live up to our Davidic calling proves to be too much work? Is this story mainly a message about being brave and daring, courageous and heroic like David? Or is there more to it? Can we find any hope here? And what's the bigger picture with all this?

I hope to delve into these thoughts as we turn now to 1 Sam. 17 and read.

READ 1 Sam. 16:1, 11-13; 17:1-16, 23-26, 31-54.

I. David: Man of Faith – A True Worshiper of the Living God

A. A Towering Problem

1. Israel is once again being threatened by the Philistines. Ever since the days of Samson, they have been a problem. Saul has had some victories against them, but his forces are weak. At one point, there was only two swords in all of Israel.
2. Now the presence of a son of Anakim – a giant, makes this battle almost impossible to win. From a human perspective, there is no hope. Goliath is described in the most fearsome way possible – all to highlight the predicament Israel is faced with. His height towers above them. Some manuscripts have his height at only 6 foot 6 inches, but since Israelites were barely 5 foot tall at this time (per archeological evidence), he would still be mammoth.
3. The height of Goliath reminds us of Israel's King. Saul was "head and shoulders" above everyone in all of Israel. He was a man's man (someone I can only dream of). He's the high-school all-star center, who learns he has to size up against Shaq O'Neal and all of a sudden finds rubber legs! From David's perspective, his own great king is cowering in his tent, the great army – their last best hope for freedom and a better tomorrow, is shaking in their boots.
4. Add to all of this, David is "just a youth", as Saul so helpfully reminds him. He was described as a man of war and a man of valor in chapter 16:18 – but we wonder if some of that was a bit of a stretch to get him into the palace. In any case, he was still learning his way around the battlefield – and had to shuffle back and forth between domestic chores and time on the frontlines (see vs. 15). Goliath was a finely tuned warrior, a veteran of many battles. And quite a bit taller than the lad – who was always being reminded of how small he was by his older brother, Eliab.
5. In chapter 16, we are told that God looks not on the outward appearance, but on the heart. And we are set up, if you will, to see this battle from this vantage point. From the outward

appearance, David has no chance at all of defeating Goliath – and he probably won't get out of this with the skin still on his back. And the army of Israel, their leader King Saul among them, are all sizing up this fight from just such a perspective. *Okay, I hope some big new warrior from up north shows up soon. Don't know what we're going to do. Or maybe we can talk Saul into at least trying to stand up to this brute.*

B. A Trusting Perspective

1. Despite his youth, David proves to be a theologian. He points out that there is a big difference between Goliath and his army, and the Israelite army. *Um, our God is ALIVE. God is a living God, and He doesn't like being made fun of here.*
2. David has faith in God's power to save them. He believes God's promise. He remembers God's past deliverances:
 - i. God rescued them from Egypt – the World Power of the day.
 - ii. God empowered Moses to lead Israel to victory over Og – whose bed was nine cubits long.
 - iii. God infused Joshua and Caleb with such faith that they didn't care that they seemed like grasshoppers in the eyes of the giant Anakim. Instead both Joshua and Caleb displaced the Anakim and took over their cities (see Josh. 11:21-22 / 15:14 – only place Anakim were left was in Philistia)
 - iv. God had saved Israel through Samuel's leadership – with thunder from heaven – 1 Sam. 7:10-12 (set up Ebenezer)
 - v. He may also refer to Heaven's army when he says in v. 26 that Goliath is defying the armies (plural) of the living God. (Jacob's angelic host, Joshua's encounter with the Captain of the Lord's host)
3. David remembered (or had read) that Joshua reminded Israel that "it was not by your sword or by your bow" that God had given them the land (Josh. 24:12). David was sure that "the LORD saves not with sword and spear, for the battle is the LORD's." (1 Sam. 17:47) – He remembered the battle of Jericho, and the crossing of the Red Sea – victories brought about by God's awesome power.

C. A Tremendous Put-down

1. David determined to act on his belief, and trust in his God. He took up the weapon he was most familiar with – and also one which would surprise the enemy. (Before Goliath sees him, David had grabbed his stones.)
2. David uses a longer range weapon (capable of 100-150 mph velocity), that was often used in battle (by the Assyrians, and even by the Israelites earlier – see Judg. 20:16 the left-handed Benjamites who could "sling a stone at a hair and not miss")
3. David is successful, but we shouldn't credit his ingenuity or resourcefulness. It isn't his bravery and courage either. Every time David gets a chance to speak in the passage he is crediting God for the victory. His trust in God's power is commemorated in Ps. 44 which is surely referring to this very battle and to David in vs. 1-7, see also 2 Sam. 22:33-40.
4. Goliath is dead, his own sword is used to take the trophy from war – symbolizing God's power in victory.

II. David: Man of Destiny – *The Anointed Future King*

A. The Pattern of Savior-Judge

1. This story plays a pivotal role in 1-2 Samuel. This establishes David's right to kingship and hints that the promise in Hannah's prayer (2:9-10) will be fulfilled.
2. In Judges, a pattern of savior-judge emerges. A champion fights for the people, and then judges them as God's representative leader. In this respect, David is the heir of Ehud, Gideon, Samson and Jephthah.
3. He is more than just a boy, he is the representative deliverer.

B. The Promise of a King

1. Similarly, Deuteronomy hinted at the role of a King for Israel (ch. 17). The job of Adam in the garden had kingly overtones (as an image of God). Hannah's prayer in chapter 2 indicates that people were hoping for a King to rescue them more permanently than the judges had. She had faith in God's word that a king would come – as was promised in Jacob's blessing, a scepter would rise in Judah's line (Gen. 49:10).

2. The people had rejected God's provision of judges (God had appointed Samuel at that time), and they wanted to elect their own savior-judge to be their king, like the nations. They wanted him to "fight their battles".
3. God gives them a king, who rules after the power of the flesh and fails. But God is faithful anyway, and 16:1 points out that he "provided for [himself] a king" for Israel. David is the first God-given king – and he will fulfill Moses' law for a king to a "T" (meditating on God's law day and night, providing poems and a worship system of songs, etc.)
4. David will go on to conquer all the land promised to Israel. 2 Sam. 8:14 says that "the LORD gave victory to David wherever he went."
5. David went on to establish plans for a permanent Temple. David receives a special covenant that his sons will be sons of God. His line will endure forever. In essence the Messiah promised in Gen. 3:15 would come thru this Judahite – David, son of Jesse.

C. The People and David

1. The cowering army of Israel found courage in David's words. David's victory was theirs, as he was their champion – fighting their battles (like they had wanted Saul to). They shared in the victory – chasing the enemy after Goliath's downfall. They shared in the spoils as they plundered the enemy camp (v. 53).
2. The women of Israel sang songs and danced about David's triumphs (18:6-8, reminiscent of Ex. 15, the women celebrating the crossing of the Red Sea & defeat of Pharaoh's army)
3. Israel transitions from a weak nation to a world power through the rule of a wise and faithful King. David's rule was benevolent and all benefited from it. Plus he gave Israel a hymnbook and a Temple worship system.
4. David did fail at times, and sin. But he repented and God did not forsake him. The books of Samuel end with a terrible sin David did that resulted in the deaths of thousands. But in that plague, David interceded for Israel, he purchased a plot of land and offered sacrifices there (in a priestly function almost), and there

where David was interceding and offering sacrifices to the Lord, the book ends with these words: "So the LORD responded to the plea for the land, and the plague was averted from Israel." This is significant because it is this plot of land that the Temple was built on and near which Jesus Christ would make the final sacrifice for sin.

III. David's Greater Son – *The Son of David, Jesus Christ our Lord*

A. David is one of the greatest Types of Christ

1. Not only is David's actions more significant than just a boy standing up to a giant – because he actually is the future king. David's actions are significant because his life foreshadows the coming of his "son" who God calls "son" (see Ps. 2 as well). David's son, Jesus, establishes the truly eternal kingdom, has no failures, rights all wrongs, and blesses his people eternally with his good rule.
2. Like David, Jesus endured rejection from his people, he wandered with no pillow on which to rest his head, like David calmed the evil spirit in Saul, Jesus had authority over evil spirits. David had a band of loyal follower who were outcasts and misfits, Jesus attracted the publicans and sinners to his message, and his disciples were considered uncouth and common by the leaders of Israel. David planned for the Temple to be built after his death. Jesus built the Living Temple of the Church after his death and resurrection.

B. David and His Son – both are "Anointed Ones" in a Gen. 3 sense

1. David was anointed and then filled with the Spirit. Jesus was anointed and filled with the Spirit too. David was a Messiah, Jesus is the Messiah. David was born of the tribe of Judah, of the family of the chosen seed Isaac, who descended from Eve, whose seed was going to bruise the head of the serpent. Jesus is in this line as well, being an heir of David.
2. It is significant that David wounded the head of Goliath, even as Jesus crushed the head of Satan (figuratively) on the Cross – and will ultimately crush Satan. David won the battle for his people

against the greatest single opponent in the OT, Jesus defeated Satan – Jn. 12:31, Heb. 2:14, Col. 2:15.

3. Goliath fell face forward and had his head cut off, and the god Dagon in chapter 4 of 1 Sam. Also fell face forward and had his head broken off – by God. David was the instrument God used to win this battle. Goliath being compared to Dagon, gives us credence to compare him with the AntiChrist to come – an opponent of God, foreshadowing Satan himself.

IV. Applying the Story – *What Does This All Mean for Us?*

A. We are reminded of our need.

1. The more we know about David, the more we see that we can't measure up to his stature of faith. So often we fail to believe in the Living God who can conquer all our problems. We see an insurmountable problem everywhere we turn.
2. We are tempted to look at our surroundings, and how dark things are and to forget the promises of God. But we should remember to "walk by faith and not by sight".
3. We should take courage and trust in God and his Promises, but we often don't.
4. Like the Isrealite soldiers, we are cowering in our boots. We can't seem to face our problems, the sins which beset us, the task that daunts us. We fear we can't face the trial sure to overwhelm us. Or we secretly endure doubts which might derail us – our salvation doesn't seem real, faith seems fanciful, and the world around us compels us to follow.

B. We are reminded of our Champion

1. But we have a Champion. God has been faithful to provide us one. Our Champion, Jesus, is Greater than our problem. And Jesus has already won the decisive battle. We just have to follow him as our mighty leader. We are sure to enjoy his spoils, and yes, we can sing his praises.

C. The Battle is the Lord's

1. God is faithful. We don't have to do the Christian life in our own strength. We have a Living God and a Loving Savior.

2. God can help us and he will – because of Jesus. God accepts us even when we're not good enough. All we have to do is rejoice and hope in him!

CONCLUSION

I'll close with a quote from Martin Luther on the way to see how this story impacts us:

When David overcame the great Goliath, there came among the Jewish people the good report & encouraging news that their terrible enemy had been struck down and that they had been rescued and given joy and peace; & they sang & danced & were glad for it (1 Sam. 18:6). Thus this gospel of God or New Testament is a good story and report, sounded forth into all the world by the apostles, telling of a true David who strove with sin, death, and the devil, and overcame them, & thereby rescued all those who were captive in sin, afflicted with death, & overpowered by the devil.

Rather than trying to "be a David" we should be thankful for our David. In fact, the Bible promises that it will be David who will return and shepherd us. Ezek. 37:24 says "My servant David shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd, They shall walk in my rules and be careful to obey my statutes." It goes on to say in vs. 27 "My dwelling place shall be with them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." This promise of God being with us comes to fulfillment when David, our Champion sits on the throne with God in the New Jerusalem and we are ever with the Lord. David – our Shepherd. Another name for Jesus, David's Son, and God's Son. We have a great Champion. Jesus is the True Shepherd-King, the one David foreshadowed. The Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep – David risked his, but Jesus truly gave his life to save us. With such a glorious Savior, we can live lives full of faith, empowered by the Spirit to overcome seemingly insurmountable problems. To persevere in faith, knowing that when we get weak, our Shepherd picks us up and carries us in his arms.

No Goliath can scare us now. Not because of our resolve to be brave and courageous, but because of our place at our Savior's feet.

Let's Pray. | Benediction: Psalm 23