
“The Battle Is The Lord’s”

1 SAMUEL 17:31-51A

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AT A GLANCE

In this sermon from 1 Samuel 17:31–51, we see the stark contrast between Saul’s fear and David’s faith. While Saul failed to recognize the deliverer God had placed right in front of him, David remembered the Lord’s past faithfulness and ran toward the battle in the name of the Lord of hosts. The message challenges us to see with spiritual eyes, to fight with spiritual weapons, and to live boldly for God’s glory—right where we are.

A SUBTLE MISTAKE AND A SPIRITUAL REMINDER

My executive assistant walked in my office Thursday and said, “please open your email and look at your email signature. Does anything look off?” It took me 2 seconds to spot it. The zip code. I live in Colona, 61241. Wildwood is in East Moline, 61244. On every card that I send from the church I make a conscious effort to right a 4 and not a 1 at the end of the zip code. One stroke of a pen, yet miles apart. Ironically, I was not so careful when I made my email signature.

Here’s the funny part. No one has caught that very subtle error until Julie did this week. It has been hiding in plain sight. This was a reminder that it is easy to overlook what is right in front of us.

SAUL COULDN’T SEE WHAT GOD HAD PLACED BEFORE HIM

In today’s passage Saul did exactly that. When it came to the battle, Saul failed to see what was right in front of him. God sent Saul a man of war to deal with his enemy so that the Lord would be glorified. Saul, unable to see as God sees, played the fool again.

Verses 31-32 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.” Pick up on the irony: a shepherd boy, who no one thought worthy, spoke words of comfort to Israel’s king!

Verse 33 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.” Once we see Saul’s deficient perspective of the situation.

David, who had the Spirit of the Lord, was able to view things the way God views them. Saul, who did not, could not. David saw an uncircumcised Philistine, a mere man who defied the living God. Saul saw an unbeatable warrior.

DAVID WAS THE PROVISION SAUL COULDN’T SEE

What is also interesting is that in 16:18, David is called “*a man of valor, a man of war.*” Saul was unable to see what the Lord provided right in front of him. God brought him a young man of war to defeat this **man of war**.

Saul could not see things as God sees them, thus he imposed upon David his own limitations. **You are not able.** Saul was not able, but David was.

FAITH SPEAKS TRUTH IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY

In verses 34-37 David recalled how the Lord delivered him several times from the mouths of lions and bears as he defended his sheep. He used the term **struck** three times and said the Philistine will be just like the beasts.

This uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them. (v. 36) This is faith-speech, not youthful naivety. This is truth in the face of adversity. And why was David so confident?

David's confidence was not in himself. The **Lord delivered** him from the **paw of the lion** and **paw of the bear** and it will be the Lord who delivers him from the **hand of this Philistine.**

DAVID'S FAITH WAS IN GOD, NOT IN ARMOR

Verses 37b-39 And Saul said to David, "Go, and the LORD be with you!" ³⁸Then Saul clothed David with his armor. He put a helmet of bronze on his head and clothed him with a coat of mail, ³⁹and 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.

David **put them off** because he had **not tested them.** But there's more to it than that. By putting them off, David could give all glory to God.

GOD USES WHAT HE HAS ALREADY GIVEN YOU

Verse 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.

He took the equipment of the shepherd to do the shepherd's work. He was not an experienced warrior, but he was an experienced shepherd. And he had been given certain skills that the Lord would use to deliver Israel. He bent down and selected **five smooth stones** that would whizz through the air. Just as he was accustomed to.

GOLIATH'S PRIDE AND POWER WERE ALL TALK

Verses 41-44 And the Philistine moved forward and came near to David, with his shield-bearer in front of him. ⁴²And when the Philistine looked and saw David, he despised him, for he was but a youth, ruddy and handsome in appearance. ⁴³And the Philistine said to David, "Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?" And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. ⁴⁴The 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."

"Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?" Is this not the tongue of the enemy? Is pride not the reason the serpent fell? Watch out Goliath! *"Pride goes before destruction, and haughtiness before a fall."* Proverbs 16:18

And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. He calls upon the impotent gods of the world. Stone and wood. Powerless. Goliath is all talk, all appearance, no substance.

DAVID FOUGHT IN THE NAME OF THE LORD OF HOSTS

Verse 45 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.

David is not intimidated in the least! He responds in kind. Goliath boasted in his strength, David in His God. It is the **name of the Lord of hosts** that David contrasts with the **sword, spear, and javelin**.

David made it clear who Goliath was fighting against; not the handsome, ruddy youth, but the **God of the armies of Israel**.

THE BATTLE IS THE LORD’S, BUT DAVID STILL RAN TO THE FIGHT

Verses 46a This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, David did not presume to be capable of achieving this himself. It is the **Lord** who **will deliver**. At the same time, David knew the Lord would use him to do it - **and I will strike you down and cut off your head**.

Rather than standing on the far side of the valley shouting theological treatises, waiting for God to move miraculously, David understood that the hand of the Lord would guide his own as he moved in faith. Not for his own glory and not even for Israel’s glory.

WHY DAVID REFUSED THE ARMOR

But (verses 46b-47) 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.”

This is the point of the story of David and Goliath. Remember Saul’s armor, David could not say this had he been clothed in armor and given a sword. According to the custom of the day, Saul would have shared in the glory of the victory had David been wearing his armor. But there he was facing the enemy with nothing but a sling and five stones. And the Lord would get all the glory!

GOD GAVE THE VICTORY THROUGH WEAKNESS

Verses 48-49 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.

In his commentary, Peter Leithart says, “Goliath was dressed like a serpent with scale armor, and he died like a serpent, with a head wound...”

ZEALOUS FOR THE GLORY OF GOD

Verses 50-51 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.⁵¹ 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 author used nine verbs to describe this one act of slaying Goliath - David is nothing like his passive father, Adam. He was active, aggressive, assertive – in a word David was *zealous*.

All David brought to the fight was a passion for the glory of God. David’s message was effectively, “The Lord’s glory is on the line. I’m willing to risk my life for it. Will you?”

CHRIST CONNECTION

David, rescued lambs from the mouth lions and our Good Shepherd rescued us from him whom Peter calls a “roaring lion.”

I said it last week, but it bears repeating: David crushed the head of the scaled giant just as Christ crushed the head of the serpent.

David stood in weakness and demonstrated God’s power with a sling and a stone. Likewise Christ, who was like a lamb led to slaughter, died in “weakness,” but demonstrated God’s power in His resurrection.

David silenced the voice of the blasphemer with one stone. Christ will one day silence the voice of all who blaspheme. Not with a stone, but with a rod of iron. (Psalm 2:9)

APPLICATION: THE BATTLE IS THE LORD’S...

...AND OUR WEAPONS ARE NOT OF THIS WORLD

Do you remember last week I pointed out that Goliath was clothed with a **coat of mail**? And how that word is literally translated *scales*? In verse 38 we read that Saul clothed David with a **coat of mail**. He was literally going to fight a scaly creature by becoming a scaly creature. Fighting the enemy by becoming like him? No! This was not going to work.

I am reminded of the words of the Apostle Paul who wrote, *“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.” Ephesians 6:12*

Therefore, he urges us to arm ourselves not with the weapons of this world, but with the belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness, shield faith, the helmet of Salvation, and the Sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God. We do not fight the enemy with swords and javelins, but with **the name of the Lord of Hosts. (v. 45)**

In the Hebrew mind, a name is more than a word. It is power. David had been sent there not only by his father, Jesse, but ultimately by His Father in Heaven, the Lord of Hosts. He went in His power and with His authority.

We are like sheep being sent out among wolves; light in the dark world. We do not wage war with our own weapons and we do not go in our own authority. I omitted one of the pieces of spiritual armor just a moment ago on purpose. Paul concludes the armor with: *“as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.” Ephesians 6:15*

This is the fight we fight. This is our battlefield – going with the gospel. Our battle is spiritual: light and darkness. The Gospel compels us to go into the darkness and wage war in the heavenly places. To set the captives free. To preach peace and grace to those who are at enmity with God. To rescue as many as possible from the kingdom of darkness.

...AND THE MAN OF GOD RUNS TO IT

While the armies of Israel fled, David **approached the Philistine**; he even **ran quickly** toward him. What a glorious image! God’s man showed up, stepped up, and ran to the fight. He did not sit around waiting for someone else to take action. He didn’t wait for God to slay Goliath and then go cut off his head as a war trophy. He acted.

Many people sit on the sidelines waiting for God to drop something in their lap, all the while they’re missing what is right in front of them. “Give me a purpose, Lord! Give me a chance to live for your glory!”

All the while they're silent at their workplace. They laugh sheepishly at the crude jokes and say nothing while people take the Lord's name in vain. They equate niceness with holiness and winsomeness with faithfulness.

They are sitting on the sidelines of the battle (probably sounding the war cry most Sunday mornings)...just waiting...doing nothing for the glory of God.

Run! Run to the battle! What are you waiting for?! The battle is all around you. The glory of God is worth dying for! And every person on the face of the earth is either saved or not. And most are not. And they will be met with a rod of iron one day for having refused to believe in the Son of God.

The enemy has the nations where he wants them. He is holding them captive. He is binding their minds. Blinding their eyes. Deceiving them with worldly pleasures and pass-times. Why are you so silent? Why are you so passive? When will you run to the battle?!

Before you run toward the battle, you must learn look back in remembrance.

...AND WE MUST REMEMBER WHAT HE HAS DONE

Verse 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." David made a habit of remembering God's hand in his life. He gave God glory for rescuing him from lions and bears. He didn't credit himself.

No, he gave God the glory. And in giving God the glory for what He had done, David was able to confidently look at the present situation through the lens of faith. He was confident that God was able to deliver him *now* because he remembered how God had delivered him *before*.

Do you practice remembering? The Psalms frequently call us to remember what God has done because we are prone to forget. How do you remember God's hand? To remember what God has done requires that we humble ourselves before Him and are quick to give Him glory. We're quick to seek His help and we're quick to acknowledge from where our help comes.

It requires that we read the Word of God, so we know stories like this one. We don't have to wait for God to show Himself faithful in our own lives, He's shown Himself faithful for millennia!

Speaking of the Word of God, we cherish the Psalms, don't we? But what are they? They're journal entries. They are the words of men of God working out the inner wrestling of their souls. David journalled. He wrote down his prayers and he wrote down when God answered them. And these served as a ballast to his soul, stabilizing him in times of great need.

Not only does remembering what He's done in past trials help us face trials today and tomorrow, it causes us to give glory where the glory is due.

...AND HE WILL GET THE GLORY

David's goal was not personal glory. The whole point of the story of David and Goliath is found in **verses 46-47 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...**

We fight not against flesh and bone. Nevertheless, we fight for the same cause as David. How do we fight? We put on the full spiritual armor of God, we stand, we pray. We ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers. And we go into the darkness with the light of the gospel. This is our fight. This is how the glory of God is spread in the world today. Our enemy is not man, but Satan. The spoils of war is not riches, but human souls. All gathered for the glory of our God!

A FINAL WORD OF CAUTION

A final word of caution to us this morning. Saul looked at this young man, David, and thought to himself, “No way he can go to battle.” He tried to dissuade David from fulfilling his God-given calling. He failed to see as God sees. He could not see what was right in front of him because he did not have God’s eyes.

Years ago a missionary specialist named Dr. Todd Errand spoke to our congregation. Several things remain locked in my mind from that weekend, but one in particular was this indictment: “The number one deterrent keeping young Christians from going to the nations with the gospel...is Christian parents.”

The battle is the Lord’s. Your children are the Lord’s. If you will remember the faithfulness of God, if you will see as God sees, if you will run to the battle yourself, I can assure you you will not discourage your child from heeding the call of God to go where He leads.

Oh Saul, why can you not see that the Lord of hosts is calling young David’s onto the battlefield **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...**”