

David And Goliath

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Preacher: Rev. Iain Macritchie

[0:00] Well friends, for a short time this evening, if we could turn back to the chapter we read, verse Samuel, chapter 17, a lengthy chapter you'll have noticed.

I do not intend in any way to go through this in detail verse by verse, but perhaps if we were to hang our thoughts on any verse, we could think about verse 50.

So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, and struck the Philistine and killed him. There was no sword in the hand of David.

The story of David and Goliath, I'm sure to many if not all of us here tonight is one that we know well.

It's a famous Bible story, a story that throughout the generations has been captured by countless individuals and countless children's Bible storybook.

[1:10] A story that is familiar to us. But isn't it true friends that even with the most familiar of stories at times they can become so known to us that we lose sight of what they have to say to us.

And I think that's the case with the story of David and Goliath. A story that has so much to teach us tonight as we find ourselves on the eve of a new year on life's journey.

A year that we look forward to with anticipation, with hope, perhaps with fear and trepidation, not knowing what's going to come into our path.

Yet a year that if we apply the principles in this story to our own hearts and lives is a year in which we need not fear.

Here we have the story of David and Goliath. Just very briefly, we're going to think about the context of where we find this story in first Samuel, the narrative where it's placed.

[2:23] Here we have the shepherd boy David. He is of course the one who against all odds has been anointed by the Lord to be the next king of Israel.

We know that yes, King Saul, he's still on the throne, but if you know the story you might remember that at the same time that David was anointed to be the next king of Israel, the spirit of the Lord was taken away from Saul, taken away from the one who blatantly turned his back on the Lord.

And of course, whenever the spirit of the Lord is taken from us, when we grieve the Holy Spirit, what happens is we begin to suffer.

And Saul was no different because as he turned his back upon God, he began to lose control. And as he began to lose control, his behavior, it became erratic, it became unpredictable, so much so that the palace officials, they didn't know what to do.

They didn't know what to do with this man and they knew that they had to calm him down. He had outbursts, angry, violent outbursts.

[3:42] And so in chapter 16, we see ironically David being selected to offer Saul what we would call nowadays essentially music therapy.

He comes and he seeks to soothe or to take the edge of the unmanageable behavior of this king to calm him down. And all the while Saul is absolutely no idea that the man who's there playing the harp for him had already been anointed to be the next king of Israel.

And in fact, in chapter 16, we read that Saul loved David, that he loved his music and that he desired for him to be his armor bearer.

And just thinking about David in that position, you can't help think how awkward it must have been for him as he sat there playing the harp for King Saul, all the while knowing that he himself was going to be the future monarch of Israel.

But no sooner do we read of Saul's need for therapy as it were that the narrative then lurches into a new crisis here in chapter 17.

[4:58] And it's this crisis that we're going to look at just for a short time. This is of course, as we can see, a military crisis, a crisis that involves the traditional enemy of the Israelites, the enemy of God, none other than the Philistines themselves.

In verse 3, we read that the Philistines stood on the mountain on one side, and Israel stood on the mountain on the other side with a valley between them.

This is a military crisis. Battle is about to take place. The Philistines on one mountain, the Israelites on the other, and the valley in between, they're ready for them to come and to meet and to fight. And you can almost just hear the tension rising on the hillside as they there prepare to do battle. But the Philistines have other plans, because as they are waiting apparently to come and forced in great number to fight the Israelites, they have other plans.

And instead of them coming en masse to fight the Israelites, a different suggestion is made. And that is that each army would put forward just one champion to fight in a duel, and in putting forward one champion to fight in a duel, the winner as it were would gain the opposing army to be their servants.

[6:32] And of course, the Philistines, I'm not going into any detail. We could see so much more about this, but just skirting over the detail. The Philistines, of course, having come up with a plan, they already have their man.

And we see in verses four to seven this lengthy description of this man Goliath. What was he like? Well, to put it in context, we can think of more recent history.

The tallest man that has ever recorded Robert Wadlow. He died in 1940. He measured eight foot eleven. Now, Goliath was a bit taller.

He was six cubits and a span, which translates to about nine foot nine. So here we have a man of extraordinary proportions, a man that really you didn't want to do battle with.

And the Philistines knew this. They knew that they had this resource. They knew that they had this man. They knew that they were very likely to win.

[7:39] And so the challenge is set. They have their man. Now Israel needs to provide their man. How will they respond?

Now Saul, of course, is their leader. And as Saul as their leader, we might think, well, he's going to show courage. He's going to rise to the challenge. He's going to find his best man.

He might not be as great in stature as Goliath, but nonetheless, he'll find his greatest man and he'll put him forward, or perhaps even he'll put himself forward because Saul was a large, strong man. But that's not what we see. And this is telling. This is so interesting, friends, when we think about the detail. Because what we read is that both he and the Israelites were dismayed and greatly afraid.

Why was this? Well, remember what I said earlier? Remember what Saul had lost. He'd lost the power of the Holy Spirit.

[8:45] And what a lesson for us going into a new year, as congregations, as Christians, as individuals, as we think about how we're going to reach out with the good news, as we think about how we're going to witness to friends and family.

It's daunting. And so when we think about this, we think how. And what we see with Saul is a lack of boldness, which leads to inactivity and indecision.

Inactivity and indecision. And that's what happens. You and me with me, we know for Christians here tonight, any times in our hearts that we've backslidden from the Lord.

It's happened to us all. When that happens, what do we find? We find that it's just not that easy to witness for our God, is it?

We don't know what to say. We may be shy away from being bold witnesses, from being vibrant Christians.

[9:52] It's easier just to hold back. I think it's a challenge that we all have. That's what we see here. We see the Israelites because they're only as good as their leader.

We see that they have all lost their nerve. He set the tone. He set the tone for the rest of them as one who's over them.

And so they retreat, they retract. They hope almost that the problem will disappear, so like us. Perhaps they hope that in saying no, that Goliath and his men, that they'll just lose interest, that they'll go away, that they'll move on to something else.

But that's not what happens. Because relentlessly, Goliath comes every day, twice a day, for 40 days, re-issuing this battle.

This challenge, rather, will you do battle? Imagine hearing that every day. You can just imagine how weary the Israelites would have been at this point.

[11:01] When this issue shows no sign of disappearing, you know what it's like when there's something that's tricky or difficult in our lives and we just, we want it to go away.

Maybe it's a person. Maybe it's a situation. And we just want it to go away, but every day it keeps coming back. It keeps coming back. Maybe it's something in your workplace.

Maybe it's a difficult situation in your family and it's just not going. It's there all the time. But then we have David, verse 12.

He comes back on the scene. And at this point, although he is anointed, yes, to be the next king of Israel, he's still spending time tending the sheep while the rest of the time he's armor-bearer to Saul.

His brothers at this point, they're, of course, part of the Israelite army so that David, under the instruction of his father, we read he goes to see them. And it's interesting the job that his father gives him, rather.

[12:06] He's asked to come and take some grain and some bread and some cheese for them to eat. David, as the youngest son of the family, he's deemed only responsible enough, and it's interesting to think about this.

He's deemed responsible enough only to deliver their packed lunch. That's what David's doing. The brothers are going to battle. They've been called to battle.

And he has this menial task at hand. But this is David and he's undeterred. And what we see is he runs up to his brothers and greets them.

You've got to admire his youthful enthusiasm. Some would even say that it was foolishness on his part. Yet all these small details were part of God's bigger plan.

That's the way God works in his rich tapestry in our own congregation. We had someone just yesterday falling in her driveway in the cold.

[13:11] She broke a bone. She could have been there for hours all day. But something we know who the Lord put in the heart of her grandson on his way to Stornoway just to turn up and ask, did she need anything?

And he found her at exactly the right time before hypothermia set. And that's the way our God works. It's all part of the plan.

Being in the right place at the right time. And we can think back in the year that's gone by and we've wondered why this has happened and the detail of this and the detail of the next thing.

But God knows. He always has a reason so that even as David is taking the packed lunch, he listens into the conversation. Verse 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? In other words, David's saying to the men, bearing in mind they're all ready for battle, how can you as courageous warriors, how can you stay here and put up with this insult against the Lord God of heaven?

[14:35] How can you do it? Now, not surprisingly, this doesn't go down well. David's brother, Eliab, who remember Samuel himself, he thought would be suitable to be king.

He's angry. He's angry that his little upstart of a brother who appears not only to have come with food, but unwelcome advice for the whole of the Israel army.

He's angry with him. He's irked by him. He's annoyed with him. Why have you come here? Go home and leave this to the men. We know what you're doing. You go back to the sheep.

You know, in David's reaction, and this is the wonderful thing about scripture, the whole humanity that's continually on each and every page. You can just see what it's like.

We see this typical brother-to-brother response. What does David say? He says, what have I done now? Was it not but a word, David asks?

[15:40] Perhaps being the youngest, he was used to getting the blame all of the time. I don't know, perhaps he was used to not being taken seriously. It may even be that Eliab knew that his youngest brother had been anointed to be the future king of Israel, and he resented this.

It should have been him. So what David's saying is, what now? What have I done now? Yet regardless of age or stature, David could see what the others couldn't see.

He could see that there was a battle to be fought in the name of the living God. Yes, this was perhaps a battle that appeared to be too great for Israel, but yet David knew that because it was in the name of the Lord, that they would not be alone.

What a lesson for us, because at times we know friends, don't we, that as we look at life's battles, and I'm sure you've had many in the year that's gone by, maybe you've had none you may have in the year that's to come.

But isn't it true that at times we look on battles and we think, I can't do this? It's too much. It's too great. It's too difficult.

[16:58] But for David, he had to fight. He knew that the honor of the Lord was at stake, and he knew that if no one else was willing to engage in the battle, he himself would.

Verse 32, and David said to Saul, let no man's heart fail because of him. Your servant will go and fight with this Philistine.

What a thought, what a ludicrous, what a ridiculous thought that this shepherd boy, this young shepherd boy, would go on to take on this giant by himself.

Yet that's what he's proposing. That's what he's willing to do. He has this boldness, this courage that Saul doesn't have, because he has the spirit of the Lord with him.

How does Saul respond? You're 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.

[18:07] In other words, you've got no chance. Stick to playing the harp. You do what you're good at, and let us get on with this. And who can blame him? Because there was no way, humanly speaking, that such a little shepherd boy could ever defeat such a giant.

What does David do? What would you do at this point? I know I would probably give up. I don't know if I would even have got to this stage in the first place.

But David doesn't give up, because he persists by going on to tell Saul of all of his past encounters. He tells of the fact that he's fought with bears and lions in order to protect his sheep. And surely, surely Goliath will be no greater than any of these wild animals that he himself has had to encounter.

And at this point, we might agree with Eliab that David does need to be in check, that he's getting ahead of himself. Yes, he's enthusiastic, but he needs to be put in his place.

[19:17] But then we see verse 237. What do we read there? 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.

Five crucial words. Five crucial words that changes the whole tone, the whole view of the attitude of David.

The Lord who delivered me from. The Lord. It was the Lord. David's acknowledging, yes, what I did was great, but I couldn't have done it by myself.

It wasn't because I am brave or strong, but rather because I put my trust in the Lord. I don't want to go and fight Goliath in my own strength.

I can't go and fight Goliath in my own strength. It's impossible. But I have the Lord. And because I have the Lord, I'm able to face the greatest of battles.

[20:26] Then we see that Saul agrees. It's astonishing. He agrees. And he says, well, okay, if you want to try and defeat Goliath, I'm not going to stop you.

But before you go, let me equip you with my armor. Now, of course, this was never going to work. We know that David was small and Saul was large and maybe this was Saul's plan just to show David how ridiculous this whole plan was.

Because we read that the fact was that Saul's chest plate alone, it would have come all the way down to David's ankles. And this he soon found out for himself in verse 38, I cannot walk in these for I have not tested them.

You can just imagine him trying to take one step in front of another, almost a comical sceneness, this little boy is dressing up in this armor.

And so he takes them off. And again, he could have given up at this point. The odds are so against him.

[21:35] And the whole scene, the whole scenario is getting increasingly ridiculous by the minute. But he doesn't give up.

And instead, he takes it upon himself to go and to find his own ammunition, his own ammunition. We might wonder what's that going to look like?

Five stones and a sling, five smooth stones and a sling. Some preachers might spend a lot of time wondering what these five stones mean and so on and so forth.

But that's important. I don't think that's the point of what we have here. But what we see is that he goes, he finds five smooth stones and a sling. And before anyone can talk him out of it, he goes straight and he approaches Goliath the Philistine.

He means business. He wants to do this. He's driven by a desire for the honor of God. And it doesn't matter what anyone else is going to say, he's going to do it.

[22:42] And so he goes. And as he comes face to face with Goliath in picture of the scene, we've got Goliath, we've got David coming face to face.

We see that Goliath's not happy. Verse 43, And the Philistine said to David, Am I a dog that you come to me with sticks?

The Philistine cursed David by his gods. And 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.

Goliath thinks he's been mocked. What are you doing with this little boy? What's this little boy going to do? I can't fight him. This is a joke.

And thinking about what we see here in this scene, we would think surely at this point, this would be enough to make anyone run for their life. Even the language that Goliath is using is intimidating to say the very least.

[23:49] But remember, he's going in the strength of the Lord. And it's amazing friends, the courage we can have when we go on God's strength. Not because we're super spiritual in and off ourselves.

We just going in the strength of the Lord. He tells us not to worry what we're going to speak at certain times because he'll give us the words. And isn't that true friends?

When we come to him, when we trust in him, we think, well, what am I going to say? What am I going to do? If we go in without perhaps coming to God in situations, we do struggle and we do stammer oftentimes by God's grace.

We don't as well. He accounts for our weaknesses, even when we don't come to him. But yet when we come to him, when we spend time with him, we have that extra layer of boldness that says, I can't Lord, but you can.

You can. And it's in your strength. I'm going. I'm coming. Then David said to the Philistine, you come to me with a sword.

[24:56] Listen to the confidence. You come to me with a sword and 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.

I don't have what you have. I don't have these earthly resources as it were. But what I have is so much greater. I have the Lord of hosts.

I have the God of the armies of Israel and you've defiled him. He is mine. What confidence, confidence that leads David to run into the battle, to put his hand into the bag.

You know the story to take the stone out, put it into the sling to fire it so that it hits Goliath just one shot, one deadly shot right in the forehead.

Just like that, he falls to the ground dead, defeated. Once again, what's the Lord done?

[26:08] It's wonderful. He's used to foolish things of the world to confound the wise. Now this isn't a legend. It's not a fairy tale.

This is history. Here we have no doubt a boy who has courage. There's no doubt about that. But yet he has more than courage. Courage will take us only so far.

We can have people who naturally, you might be that kind of person, you have that steely determination and you can keep on keeping on and maybe the person beside you is maybe more timid, maybe more weak.

But he has so much more than courage. He has faith. Faith that leads him to go into this battlefield against all odds and because of this, he prevails.

What are we to take from this? Time is gone. As we go into 2024, what are we to take from this? As I said, there's a lot of detail in this chapter.

[27:12] We've just skimmed the surface. But as we think about what we've just looked at together, I think we need to look at this chapter through two different lenses.

If you've ever been, I'm sure some of you have, if you've ever been to the optician, what happens when they're testing your eyes? You get a set of lenses put on, first of all, and you can see things fairly clearly.

And then maybe you get another set of lenses put on top of that set of lenses and then things are really clear. And that's what we see here, there are two lenses, one on top of the other.

And through the first lens, what we see is ourselves. We're quite like David here. We go through life, we face a variety of different goliaths and really we need to have the faith of David.

And to all intents and purposes, it might seem like we don't have the right resources to fight the battles of this life, and oftentimes we don't.

[28:15] And not only do we not have the resourceous friends, but isn't it true that we don't have the strength? That's often the case. We find it hard to go on.

We're weak in ourselves. And so as we find these huge mountains before us, mountains that we know we have to climb somehow, we simply don't know how.

I wonder if you have a battle like that tonight in your life. This evening, something that seems completely unsurmountable. And you think, how am I going to get through this?

How am I going to get over this? And as we look through this lens and as we see ourselves like David, or perhaps more like the Israelites, we see shapes and colours, but things are unclear.

And for some reason, we find that we simply don't have the faith that he had. And isn't that so? We look at people in scripture like this, and maybe your heart is sinking tonight.

[29:23] You're thinking, well, this is the perfect picture of the perfect Christian. That's not me. I wish it was, but it's not. Why can't I have something that's real that I can relate to here tonight?

Well, friends, this is when we need the second lens on top of the first lens to fully understand the faith that's displayed in this story. Because if we saw ourselves like David through the first lens, through the second lens, we see David like Jesus.

Because his faith is not blind faith in some abstract concept or ideology, but rather David's faith is faith in the one who has fought the battle for him.

Our faith is faith in the one who has fought the battle for us, the Lord Jesus Christ. And it's only, and this is wonderful, this is liberating. I know it's easier said than done, but it's true.

It's only because he has conquered the Goliath of Satan and sin that we can have faith, that we can have confidence in him to face the greatest mountains.

[30:33] And who else do we see? We see David as Jesus, yes, but we also see ourselves, do we not, as Israel, weak, incapable, with no hope of ever winning the battle against sin and against everything else that we struggle with in this world in our own strength.

We're always seeing it within a day of small things and we have this, and I think it's something we need to be rebuked for. Myself included, we have this defeatist attitude as the church that we've just surrendered to, we're giving up, the Lord has left us, the days of revival and renewal, they're gone, they're never going to come back, and so we're helpless almost.

I wonder is that what the Lord wants from us? Is that what he can give to us only? The sense of helplessness and hopelessness?

Because just as Israel did, what we need to do, friends, is this, we need to stand tonight as we go into 2024, we need to stand on that hillside and we need to look down into that valley or should I say look up to that hill, to Calvary's hill where we see the Lord Jesus Christ entering into that battle on our behalf just like David did for the Philistines.

And as he goes, what does he have? Well he has what appears to be nothing more than a wooden cross strapped to his back.

[32:13] Here we see Jesus so small, so small compared to that great Roman Empire. Here we see him as nothing in front of those who mocked him and derided him, just as Goliath did to David.

But yet he won the battle. He conquered death and sin and Satan crying out these words. He is our greatest resource.

It is finished. It is finished. I wonder tonight if the Goliath of sin in your life has been dealt with.

You might not be a Christian. I know most of you, not all of you, maybe those joining us online, has the sin in your life been dealt with.

Are you at peace with God through Christ? You might be scared tonight. You might be looking on what it is like to be a Christian as this great mountain.

[33:13] I know I did. You look on it and you think, well I would like to be a Christian but we put our subtext or small print under it.

I am scared of, and this is what we say in our hearts, I am scared of this, this, this and this. I believe it is fear that really holds many of us back. You are here tonight if you are not a Christian.

You obviously have a desire to hear God's word. Why are you not a Christian? What is stopping you? What is coming between you and putting your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ?

I want you to answer honestly in your heart. Only you can answer this. Is it fear? Fear of the unknown? Fear of not being able to carry on? Well I am scared if I come out on the side of the Lord I will go back and I will bring shame upon the cause.

See what we are doing there when we have that frame of mind. We are going forward leaning on our own strength. Of course you will bring shame upon the cause of the Lord and me with you if we go forward on our own.

[34:16] But He gives to us all that we need in Him. In Him. So we try and fight this battle with our own strength.

You know the amount of times I have heard people saying well can you meet Maculior? I am not good enough and neither you are. Neither am I. And that kind of theology is actually heresy because it is relying on our own good works and our own righteousness which will never be right in the eyes of God.

To deal with the Goliath of your sin you must put your trust in the one who has conquered sin himself. The Lord Jesus Christ.

The battle belongs to the Lord. Remember that. Whatever your struggle is tonight Christian or non-Christian remember that.

That the battle belongs to the Lord. And let's be liberated and equipped and emboldened as we go forward.

[35:25] Who knows what this new year has. Let's not sit back defeated as the Church of Christ. But let's go and I say this to myself and to Paak. I am not saying this to you particularly as a congregation.

But just for all of us to go forward in the strength of the Lord and the power of His might and who knows what could happen.

Let's pray.