

## David and Samuel

*Second in a series, "Touched by David"*

August 8, 2021, Aledo UMC

Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

Pastor Dave Schultz

### Old Testament Lesson, 1 Samuel 17:32-50

<sup>32</sup> David said to Saul, "Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him."

<sup>33</sup> Saul replied, "You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a young man, and he has been a warrior from his youth."

<sup>34</sup> But David said to Saul, "Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, <sup>35</sup> I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. <sup>36</sup> Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God. <sup>37</sup> The LORD who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine."

Saul said to David, "Go, and the LORD be with you."

<sup>38</sup> Then Saul dressed David in his own tunic. He put a coat of armor on him and a bronze helmet on his head. <sup>39</sup> David fastened on his sword over the tunic and tried walking around, because he was not used to them.

"I cannot go in these," he said to Saul, "because I am not used to them." So he took them off. <sup>40</sup> Then he took his staff in his hand, chose five smooth stones from the stream, put them in the pouch of his shepherd's bag and, with his sling in his hand, approached the Philistine.

<sup>41</sup> Meanwhile, the Philistine, with his shield bearer in front of him, kept coming closer to David. <sup>42</sup> He looked David over and saw that he was little more than a boy, glowing with health and handsome, and he despised him. <sup>43</sup> He said to David, "Am I a dog, that you come at me with sticks?" And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. <sup>44</sup> "Come here," he said, "and I'll give your flesh to the birds and the wild animals!"

<sup>45</sup> David said to the Philistine, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. <sup>46</sup> This day the LORD will deliver you into my hands, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head. This very day I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds and the wild animals, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. <sup>47</sup> All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD's, and he will give all of you into our hands."

<sup>48</sup> As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him. <sup>49</sup> Reaching into his bag and taking out a stone, he slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell facedown on the ground.

<sup>50</sup> So David triumphed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone; without a sword in his hand he struck down the Philistine and killed him.

**Sermon, “David and Goliath”**

This past Wednesday morning in our Men’s Bible Study, Gary Heard shared the story of the MTS *Oceanos* cruise ship which, thirty years ago this past Wednesday, ran into a terrible storm off the coast of South Africa. When the ship began to sink, the captain and his officers abandoned ship without telling anyone. Thankfully, passenger Moss Hills, a British musician, noticed that something was wrong and sent out a Mayday signal. Then Moss, his wife Tracy, and other entertainers on board organized the safe evacuation of all passengers on to one of sixteen rescue helicopters and a nearby Dutch cargo ship. As a result of their efforts, not a single life was lost.<sup>1</sup>

In the aftermath of the tragedy, Captain Yiannis Avranas and some of his officers were convicted of negligence for fleeing the ship without helping the passengers. However, none of them ever spent any time in prison.

As you might imagine, the public was shocked at what they perceived as the cowardly behavior of the captain and his officers. It reminds me of King Saul. Now at this point, we need to remember that wars are fought differently today than they were in the Ancient Near East. In our day, the leader stays well behind the battle lines, far from harm’s way. When our country was attacked on September 11, 2001, President George Bush was kept far away from Washington DC because it was believed to be a primary target. And when the war on terror commenced soon thereafter, President Bush was kept safe in his White House War Room; he did not wage war from Afghanistan.

In contrast, in Saul’s day, kings were expected to literally go to war with their troops. We will see that in a couple of weeks when we get to 2 Samuel 11, which begins, “In the spring of the year, when kings go out to war...” [It occurs to me that if presidents and prime ministers and dictators went to war with their troops, we might have peace in the world].

In 1 Samuel 17, the Philistines propose a unique battle plan: rather than having their entire army face off against the entire Israelite army, the Philistines proposed going *mano y mano*, one man against one man, winner-take-all. Each army would pin all their hopes—all of their futures—on one single soldier. Whichever soldier lost, his entire army would submit to the army of the victorious soldier.

But here’s the rub: the Philistines had a ringer named Goliath who was nearly ten feet tall! Who could the Israelites possibly put up against him in battle?

The answer was obvious: the Bible tells us that Saul stood head and shoulders above every other Israelite. He wasn’t ten feet tall, but there was no one taller than he in all Israel. Besides, he was the leader of the nation. He had been anointed king.

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<sup>1</sup> *Stand Strong* reading for August 4. Published by Our Daily Bread, 2018. The *Oceanos* sank on this day in 1991.

What the Israelites didn't know, of course, is that God had withdrawn his anointing from Saul and the rather diminutive David had already been anointed king by Samuel as we saw last week.

Saul, of course, had no interest in going into battle against Goliath, even though he'd already seen his share of miraculous victories. Instead, Saul promised great wealth to the one who could defeat Goliath. And he also promised the hand of his daughter in marriage to the victor.

When the newly-anointed David hears about the bounty awaiting the victor, he makes up his mind to go into battle against the giant.

Why was David so convinced he could defeat Goliath? The answer is found in verse 36: in protecting his sheep, David had killed both the lion and the bear. Now, in order to protect the Israelites, David was prepared to kill Goliath.

And here we find a principle: **God gives us small victories to prepare us for bigger challenges.** Before David could take on Goliath, he had to take on the lion and the bear. And I would venture to say that there were even smaller victories before the lion or the bear. For all we know, before David rescued his sheep from the jaws of a bear, he may have rescued them from a psychotic squirrel.

God gives us small victories to prepare us for bigger challenges. Before Caeleb Dressel won gold in swimming at the Tokyo Olympics, he won the 2019 World Aquatics Championship, and in 2018 he won the NCAA Division I Men's Championships. And if you go back far enough, I'm sure you'd find that Caeleb Dressel got a blue ribbon in a swim meet when he was in fourth grade in Green Cove Springs, Florida. **God gives us small victories to prepare us for bigger challenges.**

Before you can run, you must walk. And before you can walk, you must crawl. But crawling will help you learn to walk and walking will help you learn to run.

Let the Holy Spirit lead you back into your best memories: When did you have a small victory? When did you get a proverbial blue ribbon? How might that blue ribbon boost your faith that you might go for the gold?

David went for the gold. He went out to meet Goliath. He went with faith in God. We find that faith expressed in one of the most powerful passages found in the Old Testament. It's in verse 47: "...It is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord's..." David understood where he fit in God's plan. And David knew God was going to give him the victory.

God wants you to be victorious, and so God just might put some lions and bears and even Goliaths in your path that you might experience God's victory.

David didn't take a sword and he didn't take a shield. Instead, he took what was familiar to him, a sling. David planned to defeat Goliath with a stone from his slingshot.

And he succeeded. Verse 49 tells us that David reached into his bag, took out a stone, loaded it into his sling, and then struck the Philistine in the forehead, knocking him to the ground. So here's the question: how many stones did it take to drop the Philistine? By all accounts, it only took one, but notice what it says in verse 40: David took five smooth stones.

*Five smooth stones.*

Did that express a lack of faith? I don't think so. I think the other four stones were simply his backup plan in case he missed.

Of course, he didn't miss. But the stone merely felled Goliath; it didn't kill him. That was left to Goliath's own sword which David retrieved after the giant fell and then used that sword to end the threat of Goliath once and for all.

There's one final little detail I would like you to notice in verse 54: after defeating the giant, David took Goliath's weapons in his own tent. Why do you think he did that?

No doubt David kept them as an ever-present reminder of his victory over Goliath—a victory which brought freedom to all Israel. That meant that David's triumph over Goliath became yet another faith-building victory. The next time he would meet a challenge, David would be able to say, "God gave me the victory over the lion and the bear and Goliath. And this new challenge is nothing in comparison."

By keeping Goliath's weapons in his own tent, David was keeping the memory of that sweet victory close to him.

We would do well to do the same. **Keep the memory of victory close to you.** So many of us keep only the memories of our failures close to us. But learn this lesson from David and keep the memory of victory close to you. Take that precious, victorious memory into your tent and let it build your faith for tomorrow's challenges.