

I Samuel 17 "We Need a Hero"

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Date: 01 July 2018

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[0 : 00] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

Amen. Thank you, guys. Let's pray together. Father, that's our desire this morning, that we would know your power more, that we would experience more of who you are.

You are almighty. And you've come to meet with us. And that doesn't ever leave anyone unchanged.

And so would you prepare our hearts, continue to till the soil there that it might be hard or they might not be eager to meet with you or to hear from your word.

Would you help us? Would you speak to us by your spirit? Would you give us confidence in your power and love?

[1 : 09] And would you give us great joy in living for you, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Perhaps you're familiar with this famous story.

One nation is aligned on one side. Another nation lined up on the other side. And one man stands forth from each side and marches towards the other to battle against each other.

The others stand with bated breath awaiting the outcome as their two champions march toward this decisive showdown. And within moments it's over.

Dismay for one side is matched by jubilation from the other nation who has just won a penalty kick shootout to advance in the World Cup.

And some of you thought we were going to talk about David and Goliath today. In the middle of the World Cup. Now, I actually do want that picture at the end of a soccer match to be in your mind.

[2 : 22] Because this is something we don't have a great image of a lot of times. You're going to see it countless times in the coming days, that penalty kick shootout. Because most, we've reached the knockout stage of the World Cup now.

And all these games are going to be 0-0 at the end. Nobody ever scores. And then they're going to have to do penalty kicks. That's just how soccer works every time I watch it. But that aside, that penalty kick shootout, it comes down to one player and one goalie against each other deciding the outcome of after two hours of strenuous work, the whole match is there, comes down to those two against each other.

Each team sends a representative and stakes its hopes and its future on the performance of its hero. That's what a champion, a representative is.

If he wins, the whole team wins. If he loses, the whole team loses. And Israel finds itself in 1 Samuel 17, this encounter of David and Goliath in need of a champion.

After all, here are the two rival countries lined up. Israel is on one mountain, and Philistia has lined up on the other. A valley in between them, and neither army foolish enough to find itself engaged in an uphill battle, so they're stuck on these two mountains facing off.

[3 : 59] Except that the Philistines have an imposing champion, Goliath. All nine feet, nine inches of him, with armor that weighs as much as most young men by itself.

He defies the armies of Israel to send a champion out to fight against him, winner take all. Imagine, put yourself in that Israel battle line.

You're one of those soldiers that day, and you hear him day after day after day coming out. Goliath challenges you, somebody come fight me.

And you're trembling with fear. Not just at the idea of you being the one to have to fight him, but you're despairing about the future for you and your family.

Staring the reality of death or slavery for the rest of your lives right in the face. Your theme song as one of those soldiers becomes, I need a hero.

[5 : 09] Just you sing it in Hebrew. They used different lyrics back then, but regardless, you're desperate for someone who can face Goliath.

In fact, as Israel stands there on that mountainside around 1050 BC, they've been singing, I need a hero for generations.

It's been a long, long time that they've been in this situation. Ever since mankind's first champion, Adam, failed as he represented them in what should have been the faithful pursuit of God's glory that they were created for, they've needed a true hero.

Abraham loves God, right? Maybe he's the one, but he looks to save his own skin when the money's on the line. Moses is a powerful leader, but he doesn't trust God all the time.

The judges lead them to some helpful victories as God's people, but they don't maintain a passion for Yahweh's name very long. The kings are about to be really unpredictable as to what direction they're going to lead.

[6 : 26] These people are desperate. They need someone who can stand up against their enemies, who can lead them in battle to defend the honor of Yahweh against this pagan who is cursing his name.

Someone who's going to protect them, God's people lead them in loving God and living their lives for God. They're desperate for someone. Well, in fact, Israel does have a champion, don't they? You're sitting there in the battle line. It's not unclear to you who should be taking on Goliath, is it? After all, just a few years prior to this battle, the whole country has demanded that God give them a king like the nations.

Why? 1 Samuel 8, the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel. They said, no, but there shall be a king over us. Why? That we also may be like all the nations, that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles.

God give us a king to do this. And God gave them Saul. Exactly what they asked for, a king like the nations. Chapter 9, verse 2 says, Saul was a handsome young man.

[7 : 43] There was not a man among the people of Israel more handsome than he. From his shoulders upward, he was taller than any of the people. A head taller. He's the one who's the champion, right?

This is the moment you were made for, Saul. Tall, handsome, strong to fight Israel's battles. Your God is being maligned.

Your people are being threatened. You are their king. Saul wants no part of it. Remember how fearful and despairing you were feeling when Goliath came out?

Unfortunately, Saul too. 1 Samuel 17, verse 11, When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid.

All of you. Stuck there. Fearful, afraid, desperate. But there's this shepherd boy who shows up with food for his brothers.

[8 : 48] Too young, apparently, to be a part of the standing army of Israel, but old enough to be sent on an important mission. And he hears the cursing and the mocking of the giant Philistine.

And he responds quite differently from everyone else, doesn't he? What is it that he hears? David says, Who does this guy think he is? He's big, but he's messing with God.

Despising God's people. That's not okay. Verse 26, Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?

David has a zeal for God's honor, doesn't he? The first thing he hears in Goliath's challenge is dishonor to the name of Yahweh.

And he won't stand for it. Saul, on the other hand, won't stand up to it. Saul's zealous for his own safety. For his own comfort back in his royal tent.

[9 : 57] And this contrast between David and Saul is largely what this whole section of 1 Samuel is about. This story in particular, showing what the heart of a true champion of God's people looks like.

In the previous chapter, when David is anointed to be the next king of Israel, God has made clear that man looks at what? The outward appearance and picks handsome, tall, imposing Saul as leader.

But God looks where? At the heart. When he wants a leader for his people, God is concerned about the heart. And David shows us what he's looking for there.

A zeal for God's honor that mankind was created to have burn within us. We see that zeal all through this story, but especially when David is talking to Goliath.

Verse 46. David says, This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand and I will strike you down and cut off your head and I'll give the dead bodies of the host of the Philistines this day to the birds of the air and the wild beasts of the earth that all the earth may know that there's a God in Israel.

[11:18] 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.

You hear what David wants to defend? It's God's honor, isn't it? It's not his reputation, but God's reputation. Not his personal security, but the safety of God's people.

David wants everyone in Israel and the nations to know how great Yahweh is. That's what drives David. Of course, we see as that happens that he trusts God's promises.

Despite this seeming mismatch, David is confident in God's provision that he will protect his people. He tells Saul in verse 36, Saul's saying, I don't know, is this a good idea?

David has said, 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.

[12:27] He's picked the wrong fight. Not with David, but with the living God. The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.

Saul still tries to put his armor on David, doesn't he? Here, you might need this. But David's trust is not in his weapons, but in his God.

That leads to a love for God's people and that he's willing to stand in their place to represent them, even in danger. And finally, a willingness to sacrifice for God's glory.

David's zeal for God's honor means that he will defend the name of Yahweh and seek to see his glory, even if it costs him his life.

And they tell him it's going to. Saul says, you are not able, David. This is not going to end well. And yet, David goes.

[13:30] David's trust is in the Lord. He's not concerned with his own strength. In fact, he tells Saul that God is so great that no man's heart should fail because of Goliath.

Come on, Saul. Here's another chance for you, right? Don't let him make your heart fail. Here's some encouragement. Even then, it doesn't spur Saul's zeal. It doesn't build Saul's trust.

It doesn't call Saul to action on behalf of God's people. It will, after all, be the shepherd boy with a slingshot and no armor who will be sent out from the sideline against the mighty Philistine warrior. David may not look like a champion. Looks pretty weak. But he has the heart of a champion that is zealous for God. So, that sets us up for the climax of the story that we all know and love.

You know what happens. But even as they start to fight, Goliath helps David make clear that this is indeed a battle of champions but even more, it's a contest between gods, isn't it?

[14:38] Verse 43, Am I a dog that you come to me with sticks, he says? And he cursed David by his gods. The Philistines said to David, Come to me and I'll give your flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field.

What he's saying is, I'm going to expose you for as utterly weak and helpless as you are, that you're not worth anybody caring about, you're going to be killed and left for the birds.

And your powerless deity can do nothing to stop it. That's what Goliath says to him. David responds to it this way, verse 45, 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.

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 the wild beasts of the earth 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 and he will give you into our hand.

You hear what David's responding to, right? This is not David boasting, Goliath, I'm about to get you because I'm faster, smarter, stronger than you are. No. Don't you love David's passion in this?

[16:03] He's almost won before the battle starts. You might call it foolhardiness or youthful naivete if his God wasn't real and strong.

But David has a faith in his God that Saul and many other Israelites seem to lack. Put yourself in the battle line again. You're watching and listening now as they yell back and forth to each other.

Maybe David's faith gives you some faith, some hope. Or maybe you're increasingly fearful that there's going to be an ugly end soon.

David's famous statement, the battle is the Lord's makes all the difference, doesn't it? Because Yahweh fights for David, one smooth stone and a slingshot takes down the great giant and this battle of champions ends as quickly as it began.

Our kids have been learning about David this summer and our kids love to sing and we love to sing with them about David and the slingshot and the giant and all of this that happens but the passage actually emphasizes the greatness of God more so than the might of David, doesn't it?

[17 : 23] Look at just the details as this happens. 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.

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. When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled. God is so great that he uses people you might not expect to accomplish his purposes. Young shepherd boys, for example. Here, David, as the representative of God's people, conquers their enemy.

Of course, David is simply one of the best in a long, long list of imperfect champions, isn't he? Goes all the way back to Adam.

And David, we learn, is very, very imperfect. He's an incomplete foretaste of the great champion, Jesus, who reflects perfectly the heart and the victory of a champion.

[18 : 36] Jesus' zeal for God's honor and pursuit of his Father's will is without equal, right? He trusts God's promises, loves God's people, in fact, so much that he actually willingly sacrifices his life in their place.

And in doing so, even in what appeared again to be great weakness, he achieves eternal victory over our greatest enemies, sin, Satan, and death.

Triumphing over them, Colossians says, by his cross. We stand desperately in need of a champion, don't we?

Have you ever felt fearful in the face of death? Have you felt too weak on your own to battle against sin in your life?

Powerless against the attacks of Satan that you can feel being waged against you? Have you ever felt like you're not enough on your own? We all have.

[19 : 47] And Jesus is that champion that we desperately need that David is merely a picture of here in this story. That's one of the reasons I've been encouraging us to think of ourselves in this story as the Israelite soldiers.

while there are things we can learn from David, Jesus fills the David role in our story as the hero and champion, right?

We are the followers of the champion. What do the followers of the champion do after he defeats their enemy?

Verse 52, the men of Israel and Judah rose with a shout. You know what this looks like, right? Back to the soccer field. Here they come, they rush off the sidelines, they are yelling and shouting, they douse David with Gatorade, they lift him up onto their shoulders and carry him off the field.

I mean, it was a little bit different from that, but that's the essence of what's going on. They're rejoicing in him, they're shouting in triumph and relief and in celebration of their hero who has achieved victory for them.

[21 : 03] They realize the battle is won before they perform it all. They want everyone to know how great their champion is, right? They're lifting him up and celebrating him, that he's delivered them in their great distress, that he's the one they're going to follow.

Is that how you feel about Jesus? I mean, you can leave out the Gatorade, but is that how you feel about Jesus? Do you act like someone rescued by him from desperate need?

Do you rejoice in him? Do you delight in telling others about him and about what he's done for you?

Keep reading. They rose with a shout and pursued the Philistines as far as Gath and the gates of Ekron, so the wounded Philistines fell on the way from Sharem as far as Gath and Ekron and the people of Israel came back from chasing the Philistines and they plundered their camp.

This is what I call living in the victory of our champion. Now that David has defeated the Philistine champion, all the Israelite soldiers rush forward and chase the Philistines and plunder their camp.

Victory is theirs! They rush forward shouting, rejoicing in their champion and the speakers are now blaring a different theme song, no longer I need a hero but we are the champions.

[22 : 31] That's what's going, I think, as they're rushing forward because it's not merely that they're celebrating their champion. They're now living like champions, aren't they? They're acting like someone who just won.

See, they get the privilege of benefiting from a victory achieved by someone else on their behalf. David fought for them but now they get to act like champions, defeating their enemies, plundering their camp.

They are transformed. They're very different people. Think about this for a second. They start acting like David. Just a few minutes ago, no one in the whole group would be like David. David, their cowardice now turns into confidence, doesn't it?

Their fear turns into joy. Their inactivity, embarrassing inactivity against the enemy turns into victorious battling against the now defeated enemy.

It's what God calls us to as followers of our champion, Jesus. Please hear me clearly. There is only one champion, right?

[23 : 45] One true hero. But in the Bible, God regularly calls leaders to do particularly what He actually requires of all of us. Followers too.

Those of us in leadership ought to be especially listening but it's for all of us. Start by examining our own hearts. Are we zealous for God's honor?

No, I'm actually asking, really, what is your passion in life? Does your heart burn or yawn when God is dishonored?

What would your spouse, your friends, your kids say you're passionate about?

We're all zealous, passionate for something. Is it football? Fashion? Facebook? Facebook? Do you so trust God's promises and love God's people that you would be willing to sacrifice anything to see His name glorified?

[25 : 00] In other words, can people see your zeal? I know you say it's there, it's in my heart, I am, I'm zealous, I'm passionate for God, but it looks and sounds like something when David wants to make sure the nations know there is a God in Israel, doesn't it?

Are you committed to the nations knowing the greatness of your God? Do you invest your time, money, and energy to that end? You don't have to go to Peru or somewhere else, but that's one place you can.

You know, we have a great tendency to do as Christians these days. I think it's part of our fearfulness a part of it is our self-protective love of comfort.

A part of it is the celebrity culture that we live in and are surrounded by. What we like to do is we like to find Christian heroes and delegate our zeal for God to them.

Even pay them to be zealous for God so we can focus our passions on ourselves. Do you find that in your heart sometimes? We find an amazing person like Billy Graham.

[26 : 18] We delegate to him or to lesser pastors the job of making sure our neighbors are saved and the nations hear the good news of Jesus.

We delegate to Mother Teresa or other lesser mercy ministry leaders the job of making sure the poor experience the love of God.

And yes God does call us all to different places but he calls all of us to be actively zealous for his honor not just to share it with somebody else not just to pay someone else to do it but all of us to be driven by what drives David into battle against Goliath and the great part is because Jesus has conquered because his spirit lives within each of us we really can live in his victory running toward the enemy joyfully to plunder their camp who's the enemy that Jesus has conquered for us we're not chasing with swords the Philistine army Jesus has conquered sin and death and the devil this is where it gets really exciting y'all we get to storm the gates of hell knowing that they are flattened already by our savior he's already knocked them down we charge against them and nothing can stand we get to turn to our own hearts and find sin there and begin to root it out and battle against it knowing that it's not stronger than we are because we can turn to our king we get to move into this world and plunder a culture of death see the work of the devil in our city and in the name of the champion who has gained us victory over them we march in and no greater is he who is in us than he who is in the world we battle defeated foes on all those fronts what if we were altogether zealous for that for the victory of king

Jesus to be displayed in Huntsville and for the effects of sin and Satan to be driven back in our city and around the world y'all our king promises that the gates of hell will not stand against his church how can we stand on the sidelines wondering if it will cost too much or be worth all the effort after the olympics there's a tour of champions you may have watched it before gymnastics or figure skating medalists or whatever the sport is will tour together go around and do a series of exhibitions after the intense competition and pressure of the olympics where everything was on the line they now relax and enjoy the tour of champions have you seen that before can you imagine the boldness and the freedom of those exhibitions athletes no longer performing before the watchful eye of the judges or the world but having already earned the gold medal now just having fun they might even try an amazingly difficult routine it's actually really fun to watch because the pressure is off right what if

I fall in front of the crowd the scorn of the crowd couldn't make any difference hey who are you laughing at gold medal gold medal I've already I've already won I can't lose this you can't take it away do you know that kind of joy and freedom in your life is your reputation in Christ so secure that you can rush boldly toward an enemy stronghold that really might make you look foolish and risk your reputation what will storming the gates of hell look like for you where God has placed you for us where God has placed us for us where God has sent us into the world if you trust Jesus the great champion then your victory is won and you're living in a tour of champions now go for it we were created to be zealous not for our own comfort but to be zealous for the honor of God we were redeemed by our great champion who defeated all his and our enemies not to live self protectively but to live self sacrificially giving all that we are and all that we have to rejoice in our champion and to live in his victory let's pray

[31 : 40] Jesus we confess to you that we often like the narrative better where we get to be the strong one where we have enough where we get the glory but we also confess that we are not enough on our own that we can't manage that our zeal wanes and we are grateful that you have stood in our place that you have defeated enemies too strong for us so that they no longer are would you give us joy and freedom would you give us hearts that don't have to defend ourselves but are eager to defend the name of our God to see his name be made great to see his glory fill the nations

Father thanks for the privilege of being a part of that work equip us stir our hearts that our zeal would match the zeal of the champion who has given himself for us in Jesus name we ask Amen for more information visit us online at southwood.org