

1 Samuel 17 “Having a Hero”

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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.

! You will find this famous Bible story in 1 Samuel 17. 1 Samuel 17. If you turn there, I'm going to summarize parts of this story and read other parts as we go through this morning. But I want us to think carefully about this story, especially when stories are familiar. We need to make sure that we're understanding what God's telling us, not just what we like to think. We need to understand the bigger story it's a part of so that we don't end up with a message this morning that is, be like David and you'll slay the giants in your life. Have you heard that message before? Yep, that's a common message out there. But it's a really confusing message to say, be like David when David commits murder and adultery. It doesn't work so well. Neither do we want one you've probably heard, the five smooth stones that we all need to defeat our enemies. Some of you have heard that one. There are lots of different lists of what those five stones are. It's really rough actually when they're not identified in the Bible.

And David uses actually how many? Oh, only one of the five. So then the other four you just don't get to use anyway. So what's the story actually all about? Well, remember that the issue recently in the Bible story as we've been walking through it here in the Old Testament has been about the king.

First, the lack of a king for God's people, right? They didn't have a king and so they were turning from God and doing whatever they wanted to do. And then last week, Bill Nash showed us so beautifully this idea of Saul, the king that they asked for, the king like the nations. And Saul was actually rejected by God as king in favor of a shepherd boy with a heart for God. God's people need a king, a hero, one to stand for them. In fact, that's exactly where the story of David and Goliath, opens, isn't it, at the beginning of 1 Samuel 17. The two countries are lined up like the boys and the girls that we had up here. There's Philistia on one mountain and all their army, and then there's Israel and all its army on the other mountain, a valley in between. Neither one of them foolish enough to wage an uphill battle, right? To go up the hill against the other army, but Philistia has a secret weapon. They have a champion. Goliath represents them. He strides out to the front, all nine feet, nine inches of him, no stool needed. His armor alone, the weight of a young man.

And he defies the armies of Israel to send a champion out to fight him, winner take all, one on one. This morning, we need to think of ourselves in the front lines of God's people, seeing Goliath come forth and challenge us. Imagine that you're one of those soldiers. That's who we are in this story, okay? You're trembling with fear. You're despairing about the future for you and your family. You are staring certain death or slavery for the rest of your life right in the face.

[4 : 05] Each morning, you wake up and the music in the camp is the same song. It was, I need a hero just in Hebrew, okay? It was the same tune. That's not from the Bible.

But they desperately need a hero. Where is Israel's hero? Their champion, their king. Where is Saul?

He's a head taller than the rest of them. He's a mighty warrior. He's handsome. He's the king like the nations. And he is cowering somewhere in his royal tent. No wonder the rest of us are afraid.

Listen to Goliath, verse 8. Why have you come out to draw up for battle? Am I not a Philistine? And are you not servants of Saul? Choose a man for yourselves and let him come down to me.

And when Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid. Even Goliath named Saul, right? He knows the one who should be coming out there to fight him.

[5 : 33] But Saul is dismayed and greatly afraid. We find out later that all Saul can hear and see is that giant yelling day after day, this imposing warrior. So he sees David and he thinks David is too small and too young. The only thing Saul thinks could possibly help is more armor, right? Here, take my armor.

Saul's not going to go himself, but he'll try to loan David his weapons. That'll help you. That's what you need. There's no vision of his God at all, is there? The rest of the Israelites think, well, if Saul is scared, I've got no chance. So even though Saul offers them a wife and riches and a tax-free life, no one will risk it. Verse 24, all the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him and were much afraid. They saw the man. They saw the man, the one mocking them and their God. They saw the big man.

And that enemy seemed too much to overcome. That's all they could see. There's actually one other person in this story who sees the fight the same way that Saul and all the Israelites do. That's Goliath.

It's just me against you, David. Unbelievable. Paraphrasing Goliath's words, he says, you little pipsqueak. My gods are going to crush you and your so-called God who's as weak as your toy slingshot you're carrying. This won't even be a fight. Just look at me and look at you.

Notice that almost everyone in this story sees only what their eyes can see.

[7 : 44] And what's the result? Yahweh's people, full of fear, self-protective, shaking in their boots. This is the end. This is the end. I need a hero. Isn't that what we as God's people are often saying? When all we see is what our eyes can see.

There's just no hope for my spouse, my kid, my co-worker, my friend. I've analyzed the way they're acting. I've seen it enough times. I've tried my best to help them change. There are just no other options. I give up. You know what that is? Practical atheism creeping into our hearts.

Practical atheism showing up in our lives oftentimes. No notion of a living God active at work in my difficult situations. I quit hoping. I even quit praying.

Pastor, I just can't stop talking that way. I never can quit looking at these images. I can't stop drinking earlier and earlier in the day just to get through the day.

[9 : 08] The temptation is too strong. I can't overcome it. I'm just going to quit trying. Those are practical atheism. I think the biggest form of practical atheism in our culture is giving up on the possibility that life with God might be true life.

I just refuse to try anymore finding the good life apart from all the stuff I have. I love it. I won't be seen apart from it. No way could the good life involve my giving up control, my self-rule. That's what life is. I want to do what I want to do. That must be life.

I mean, yeah, I'm at church. God might be a piece of my life, but the non-negotiable is this other relationship and enjoying it or ending it when I want, how I want, regardless of what God has to say about it. That's life.

Practical atheism. I say I believe in God. But in my life, I'm a leader of God's people, just protecting my own wealth, my own comfort, my own reputation at the risk of God's glory and others' safety.

Or I'm a member of God's people, but I'm cowering in fear at the enemies before me with no real thought to the impact of an actual God at work in my world.

[10 : 57] I'll sing about him, but I'm not going to expect him to show up on Monday. Have you felt that way when Goliath, the enemy of God, yells really loudly at you, looks really big in front of you? I'm outmatched. I have no real hero. I can't compete with him.

It struck me this week how often I live that way. It struck me the one thing that sets David apart from that approach to life, from being just like everybody else in this story, is that he sees God involved, doesn't he?

David's playing chess while they're playing checkers, we would say. They're doing algebra, but he's doing calculus. Seeing God's presence with him changes the math of the battle, doesn't it?

It's like walking up the steps. It's also interesting to me that David is the only one not up at the battle lines all the time.

I don't know if you feel like that's where you are. All you can see is this war going on around you. Is it possible that we need to take a step back, a step up, away from the smoke of the battle, to see God clearly, and to see God first?

[12 : 27] I want to urge you, without slowing down, without stepping back to account for God in your life, your fear may continue to grow. Your hope may wane.

Your despair may take over because all you can see is what your eyes can see. But when David sees God in the equation, we see a completely new vision, a marked contrast between fearful Saul and the newly anointed leader of God's people.

This story shows what the heart of a true champion of God's people looks like. We were told to look for this in the previous chapter when David's anointed as the next king of Israel.

And God makes it clear that man looks at the outward appearance and picks Saul as leader, but God looks where? At the heart. David shows us here a zeal for God's honor, that we were all created to have this burning within us, this zeal, this passion.

We see it especially when David talks to Goliath. 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.

[13 : 52] This day Yahweh will deliver you into my hand. Verse 47, all the earth may know there's a God in Israel, all this assembly may know that Yahweh saves, not with sword and spear, for the battle is Yahweh's and he will give you into my hand.

Do you hear what David wants to defend? Is it his own reputation? All right, Goliath, I'm not as weak as you think. Let me tell you what I've done. No, it's God's reputation.

It's not even his personal security. It's the safety of God's people. David wants everyone in Israel, in fact, he wants everyone in the nations to know how great Yahweh is.

And that's what drives David, isn't it? And it drives him to love God's people. He's willing to stand in their place. No one else is.

He's willing to represent them, even in danger, even when it seems certain he's gonna lose his life. He wants to remove the reproach against God's people, he says, verse 26.

[15 : 02] He tells Saul, he'll be their servant so no one else's heart need to fail. He'll fight the giant on behalf of the fearful, the helpless, the desperate, who cannot fight for themselves day after day after day and they're not getting anywhere and no one will stand up except David will.

Zeal for God's honor, love for God's people, and confidence in God's power, right? David sees God active. There's just no doubt about it.

He sees him being active in this situation as he has in many others in his life previously as a shepherd. Listen to how he explains to Saul where his confidence is coming from. His confidence is not in himself, is it?

Verse 36. 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.

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. You see where David's pointing?

[16:12] It wasn't his strength with the lion and the bear, it was the Lord. And even Saul understands it. What does he say? Go and Yahweh be with you. Not go, you sound like a great fighter.

No, you sound like a shepherd and I'm worried. But it sounds like you see somebody I don't see. There's a God who will fight for you.

God has fought for me before, David says. He'll do it again. Even that reminder doesn't spur on Saul's zeal. Saul's staying in the tent, right? Doesn't build his trust, doesn't get him to action on behalf of God's people.

It's gonna be this shepherd boy with the slingshot. No armor. He's gonna walk out from the sidelines against the mighty Philistine warrior.

He may not look like a champion, but he has the heart of a champion that is zealous for his God. This is something we see in this big story, okay? As we've been mapping out God restoring and rescuing us, how does God restore relationship with his people through a king with a heart like this?

[17:26] Stay tuned. Here's the famous part of this story. Goliath actually helps David make clear that this is indeed a battle of champions, but even more, it's a contest between gods.

That's part of why they often did this champion thing in these days. They saw wars between nations as actually battles between the nation's gods, and so if one-on-one could decide which god was stronger, why have everybody else die?

Right? Verse 43. Goliath says to David, am I a dog that you come to me with sticks?

And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. 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.

I will utterly humiliate you so that you will be exposed as weak and worthless and my gods will mock your powerless deity!

[18:30] As we capture your entire army, everybody will know who the real God is. David responds, 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 to the wild beasts of the earth that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel and that all this assembly, including the really fearful ones, 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.

Don't you love David's passion? I mean, you might think it's misguided, right? I mean, come on man, you're about to be smoked. You're in the battle line watching and maybe his faith gives you some hope but maybe you hear him and you're like, oh man, this is not going to end well for us.

Stop trash talking before they kill us. But 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 heroes ends as quickly as it began.

[20 : 09] David, of course, is an imperfect foreshadowing of the great hero, King Jesus, who reflects perfectly the heart and the victory of a champion.

Jesus' zeal for God's honor, right? His faithful pursuit of his father's will, it's without equal. He loves God's desperate people like you and me.

in fact, so much that he sacrifices his life in their place and in doing so, even in what appeared to be great weakness, he achieved eternal victory over our greatest enemies, sin, Satan, death.

Triumphing over them, Colossians tells us how, by his cross. He then rises from the grave. As he conquers death, he becomes the permanent king on David's throne that God covenants here with David to provide for him and his people.

Y'all, we stand desperately in need of a hero. I hope that you can see that and say that this morning.

[21 : 21] And then once we see that, there are really two options for us. We can either try to be the hero, feels kind of good, or we can rejoice that we have a hero.

hero. Friends, in our story, the role of King David, hero, conquering the giant is played by Jesus.

Please don't get confused. There are really good things for us to learn about our zeal for God, our love for his people, our confidence in his power. Absolutely.

May our hearts reflect those priorities more and more. But they don't always. We're not the righteous king. So ultimately, we don't need to be the hero.

We need to have the hero with all of those perfectly, right? And then, and then, once we get that straight, once we know who the hero is, we can consider our role in the story.

[22 : 28] Then, with the battle won, with victory achieved for us, with the hero crowned king forever, and our trusting in him, our lives should be transformed.

They have to be. We can move from protective of self to zealous for God, from focused on self to loving other people, from fearful and cowardly to confident and expectant.

Why? Because God is present and active and powerful in us and through us and for us. look what happens in this story when God's people realize all of a sudden, I have a hero.

What happens? Look at verse 52. The men of Israel and Judah rose with a shout. They hadn't shouted in weeks.

Over and over, Goliath has been standing there and they have been withdrawing quietly. Look at the change. They rise with a shout. Picture them rushing the field, dumping Gatorade on David, crowd surfing him on their shoulders.

[23 : 39] I mean, it's not exactly like that. But that's what's going on in their hearts. I hope your heart thrills at King Jesus' victory for you like that. They want everyone to know how great their champion is, how he has delivered them in their great distress, how he's the one they'll follow.

They're running forward behind him. Is that how you feel about Jesus? Does everyone know that? Keep reading. Verse 53, the people of Israel came back from chasing the Philistines and they plundered their camp.

That's what it looks like to live in the victory of the hero. Remember, we're the ones standing on the battle line waiting to see how this contest of heroes is going to play out.

Look at us fearful soldiers now turn around and run forward. Just as Israel won when David conquered, so we, united to Jesus by faith, have victory when Jesus conquers.

Jesus conquers. Remember what we said earlier? Our king defeats all his and our enemies. The battle is the Lord's.

[24 : 52] Praise the Lord. The battle is his. The victory, glory, though, is ours. Just as it was for all the girls, remember? Right up here. They all won when one of them won.

So now we plunder the camp of the enemy. Be really clear. Our enemy is Satan. Our struggle not against flesh and blood.

Not swords loud clashing that we fight with, but deeds of love and mercy in King Jesus' wake. Don't be confused on that. But because Jesus has conquered, because his spirit lives within us, we really can live in his victory, running forward joyfully to plunder the enemy camp.

This is where it gets exciting, y'all. We get to be all together to storm the gates of hell because King Jesus has knocked them down. Don't you want to be a part of something like that?

Boy, these gates aren't going to be too tough. What if we were all together zealous for that? For the victory of King Jesus to be displayed in Huntsville?

[25 : 58] The effects of sin and Satan to be driven back in our own hearts and in our world? Our King promises that the gates of hell will not stand against his church, so how can we stand on the sidelines fearfully wondering, it might cost too much?

I don't know if it will be worth the effort. I want to spend just a couple more minutes here as we wrap up, because I think it's difficult to connect these dots.

Our role plundering the enemy's camp, that's a little odd. Will, I don't even plunder anything. I want to give you some examples. Don't do them all, there's too many examples.

And these are just ideas, not biblical directives that you must do and must do this way. I'm asking, what could it look like for us to live with zeal for God's honor in plundering the enemy camp with King Jesus?

What could that look like? These are ideas to get you excited and creative, because you'll have better ideas than I do. You can plunder Satan's camp physically.

[27 : 08] See, because Jesus has come to set us free from Satan's bondage, because Satan is actually a defeated foe on the run from the true king. You can show up physically for people who are trafficked for their bodies, or trapped in generational poverty, and deeds of love and mercy and generosity and justice.

Snatch them out and remind them who they are and who God made them to be, and you can be a part of that. You can plunder Satan's camp emotionally if you prefer.

This is work in your own heart, which may seem harder. The Bible says Satan tries to keep us in bondage to the fear of death, the anxiety about the future, and it can be crippling.

Many of us know that. But King Jesus says, I've risen from the grave. I have conquered death. I have been crowned, in fact, king over all.

I'm in control of all of it so you can trust me. So that battle for you plundering the camp means you start listening to his words. When I am afraid, I will trust in you.

[28 : 27] In God I trust, I will not be afraid. What can man do to me? You listen to those rather than Satan's lies that tell you you can trust only yourself.

You'll only be okay when you're strong enough. No. the God of angel armies is always by my side. And moment by moment in community by God's spirit, I find freedom and confidence and joy.

You can plunder Satan's camp spiritually because Jesus has come and he's paid the penalty for sins, defeating sin once for all. you can share that good news with your neighbor with real hope.

You can commit to praying for that friend who seems resistant to the light of the gospel and just beyond hope that you're ready to give up on. You can pray that King Jesus who's alive and active brings them from darkness to light.

You can plunder Satan's camp intellectually. Satan is the father of what? Lies. But Jesus specializes in the truth.

[29 : 40] So you may be in classrooms or online or in relationships where you can use your gifts to articulate the freedom that's found in surrender rather than self.

It's countercultural but it's really biblical. You can display the beauty of God's design for sexuality. You can argue graciously and powerfully for the value of life in a culture of death.

You can plunder Satan's camp intellectually. You can plunder Satan's camp financially. It doesn't even matter how much money you have. Because Jesus has stormed through hell you can use your money to blow another hole in the gates of hell.

Isn't that fun? It's more fun than a lot of things you can do with money. Maybe you say I realize I can trust Jesus enough to take care of me that this month in addition to giving to my church I'm going to give something to a mission partner and push Satan back and watch God work.

You can plunder Satan's camp relationally. He would love to isolate those that Jesus has brought together.

[30 : 55] So go spend time with someone lonely. Forgive someone whose sin Jesus forgives like yours.

Reconcile with a spouse, a friend, a family member because Jesus is alive. Not because it feels easy but because Jesus is alive and Satan can't defend his territory while running away from the power of his spirit that is alive and active in you.

What's God putting on your heart? We pray about it this afternoon. God, how can I be a part of this? You live in the victory of King Jesus.

You have a hero. He achieved his victory by stepping up as your hero and fighting your greatest enemies and dying in your place.

Savor that sacrifice, the one who made it as you come to this table. It was on that night when Jesus was betrayed to his death in your place that he sat with his disciples and he took bread and he broke it and he gave it to them as I ministering in his name give this bread to you.

[32 : 20] He said take and eat. This is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way he took the cup after supper saying this cup is the new covenant in my blood shed for many for the forgiveness of sins drink from it all of you.

For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Today without even opening your mouth you proclaim Jesus' death.

You are shouting the name of your hero. You are declaring that you need a hero and that you have a hero. You come and eat at his table.

That's what you do to declare the Lord's death. If that's the hope of your heart baptized Christian come and eat. If you would not want to make that statement if that is not your hope then don't come declare Jesus as your only hope by eating and drinking these elements.

But would you this morning whether you come and observe or whether you stay where you are consider your need for a hero consider Jesus' sacrifice would you even this morning accept his offer to be your king to be your hero and give you true life everlasting life with him.

[33 : 55] Let's pray and then we'll come to this table together. Jesus what a great gift that you give us this morning a reminder that our king who reigns over all stoops to live with us not just when we're in this room for a few minutes on a Sunday morning but that you live with us every moment of every day.

You gave your life so that that could be true and so would you grow our faith through common elements in a powerful way in each of our hearts.

We ask it in your name. Amen. For more information visit us online at southwood.org or