

“Lord God, you have appointed me as a pastor in your Church, but you see how unsuited I am to meet so great and difficult a task. If I had lacked your help, I would have ruined everything long ago. Therefore, I call upon you: I wish to devote my mouth and my heart to you; I shall teach the people. I myself will learn and ponder diligently upon your Word. Use me as your instrument – but do not forsake me, for if ever I should be on my own, I would easily wreck it all.”

“Sir, we would see Jesus.”

1 SAMUEL 17

47 ... all those gathered here will know that the LORD does not save with sword and spear, for the battle belongs to the LORD, and he will deliver you into our hand.



Military history proves that no one is immune to battle stress. In the Battle of Stalingrad, the Soviets defeated the Germans and turned the tide of the war. It took them 6 months – continual stress, 24 hours a day, for six long, grueling months. Some Russian reports say that their veterans of that great battle died around age 40, while their uninvolved peers lived into their 60s and 70s.

History teaches that no matter how well-trained the soldier is, no matter how tight the ranks, no matter how technical the leaders are, men in battle will collapse under the stresses and strains inflicted upon them by their horribly destructive environment. Given enough time in combat, every soldier will eventually suffer a mental collapse. So writes Richard Gabriel in his book, “No More Heroes.”

Civilians, and even soldiers, often have no idea how threatening psychological collapse is in battle. It is not rapidly or easily cured. In every one of America’s wars last century, the casualties of psychological collapse have exceeded the number killed in action.

So when Goliath taunted the Israelite encampment into paralysis across the valley, we shouldn’t be surprised. We shouldn’t be surprised that Goliath’s taunts and insults and challenges across the valley and the so-called “blood border” lasted 40 days, morning and evening, and that the best of the best weren’t courageous enough to take up arms; that is, not until a small shepherd boy, with stick and sling and God-given faith, trusted that ...

THE BATTLE BELONGS TO THE LORD

I guarantee you that this fact will mess with your way of thinking (in a good way): the battle belongs to the Lord. Not the mindgames, not the right weapons, not the victory—but the whole battle itself belongs to the Lord.

If you consider your sins, you may be on your way to psychological collapse. If you really knew the enemies of your soul, you would be a psychological mess. That's why this is such good news.

There are exciting things in our text. First, there is the giant, Goliath, with all of his intimidating armor. Goliath trusted in his weapons and armor. He wore bronze all over, from his helmet to his coat of mail armor to his greaves, which were like boots without the shoe. We can't be sure about weights and measures here, but maybe 150 lbs. for the coat of armor and about 20 lbs. for the spearhead. I read a Jewish scholar this week who made a great case that this really fits the time period, if you see what sea-peoples like the Philistines wore to battle. And clearly Goliath trusted in his weapons and armor.

Second, you see the tough talk. Goliath had no use for the true God, and he taunted and insulted the Israelites accordingly. He was pretty sure of himself that there would never be a champion his size and class. He set the rules of engagement: one-on-one combat would determine the victory for all. And Goliath had no use for the true God.

Third, you see the terrified troops of the Israel camp. Even King Saul, who was always a head taller than any of his troops, was not immune to the terror. He was shaking in his boots. So God's people had become psychological casualties.

King Saul was such a psychological casualty, that he put his trust in the same thing Goliath did. If David was going to attack, he must first have the stature to do so. Then he must have enough weapons and armor. But that is because Saul never understood that God wanted heartfelt obedience over sacrifice, and trust over the fat of rams. So Saul was rejected as king to make way for this shepherd boy, named David.

When David did show up, he had to do a lot of convincing to get his chance on the battlefield. In so doing, David proved that the Lord has a track record of protecting and providing.

Do you trust in the heavy armor of Goliath? Do you feel like you're expected to fit into the armor of Saul? Doing what's right is heavy armor; it's easy to crumble and collapse under the pressure. There are big expectations in this world, that we might fit into the shoes of great heroes before us. Why can't we meet those expectations? Why do we expect the provisions of this world to fit us?

Face it; you put on Saul's armor a lot. You look for the bigger gadget or the better toy or the brighter solution to meet your need. What if God meets your need? What if that nagging problem or that pet sin has you shell-shocked and sidelined? Is it possible that God fits it, but if only you trusted the battle to Him?

We think small. God thinks big. We want God to bring the victory. We forget that God has not only the victory in mind, but He has designed the battle lines.

You may ask, "Why did God let me lose my job? Why didn't He solve that for me?" Is it possible that the battle is the Lord's and your job wasn't right for you? You may wonder, "Why did God take my friend? She was too young to go." Isn't it possible that the battle is the Lord's, and victory for your friend looks different than you presumed? You may ask, "Why did the Lord allow me to be tempted in such a way? Didn't He know I would sucker for it and sin, like I always do?" Isn't it possible that the battle is the Lord's, and, while it's no great thing to sin, it's important for us to struggle mightily against it?

David went on to beat the giant with his sling. As sweet as the giant's heavy helmet was, there was a weak spot between the eyes. No sword, spear, javelin, greaves, or coat of armor could help Goliath now. The stone sank right in, and David finished the job with the giant's own sword. Defeat for the giant and his garbage gods, failure for the Philistines, victory for David, blessing for Israel, and glory for the Lord!

So, David did it, and you can too! Right? Spiritualize it, and many naturally consider themselves to be David, as if we are David in the story. Trust in the Lord and you will slay your giants in life; your lions and bears have no chance. But let me steer you in a different direction.

What if I told you ... we apply this better by saying that you and I should see ourselves as not David, but the ranks of Israelites? We were psychological casualties of spiritual warfare. We were powerless to do anything. Even the best among us, the guy who's spiritually a head taller than all of us, is terrified—and should be terrified—of our real enemies.

The better comparison to David is Jesus. Jesus—not ourselves—is our champion. Jesus—not ourselves—has overcome and won the victory. Jesus has defeated our many foes. Jesus, in the place of David, does not leave us depending on ourselves, wondering if we eventually will champion the cause.

Just think: David was the exemplary shepherd-king, just as our Great Good Shepherd-King. Jesus is the Son of David, who must “restore David’s fallen tent.” Jesus in Ezekiel, in fact, is called “my servant David” who will “be King over them, and they will have one Shepherd” (37:24). So this is not a manufactured application. David was anointed as a king, and, though possessing all the royal qualities, was not known or recognized as king by the people for years to come. Then David lived as a fugitive, fleeing from the jealous and vengeful King Saul. So our Lord Jesus likewise lived a life of humiliation among men—dishonored, unrecognized, reviled, and persecuted when He finally did make Himself known. David is a clear type of Jesus Christ.

But Jesus is much greater than David. David won the victory against the giant, slaying the enemy for all the Israelites to route the evil Philistines. Jesus has beaten sin. Jesus has beaten death. Jesus has beaten the devil. Jesus has crushed the temptation as well as the temptor. Jesus has gone to our passion and our death that we may have the victory. For the battle was the Lord’s from the very beginning. Jesus, not us, is our champion.

Just think: the devil offered Jesus all the kingdoms of the world, but they were already His from the beginning. So the devil wants you to believe you have to win the victory over sin and death, but the battle is the Lord’s. To rely on ourselves will only end in defeat and sorrow. Take up arms, from the sword of the spirit to the shield of faith, from the belt of truth to the fitted feet of readiness. But know who owns the battle, who won the battle, and who gives the battle over, for you. It is Jesus, under whose banner and in whose name you fight, Amen.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.