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The Battle is the Lord's!

1 Samuel 17:46-47

In this year's state of the state address Governor Tomblin outlined a number of the problems facing West Virginia's citizens and leaders. The funding of highways, the need for jobs, the improvement of education, the problem of drugs, and the increase of youth confinement are all major issues confronting our state. It is certainly hoped that our government leaders working together with those in communities can somehow resolve these tremendous challenges. But what about the problems for which there seem to be no answers? Not only problems in our state or communities but problems facing us in our own lives? In the familiar account of David and Goliath we find how through faith in God we can face our greatest problems.

A Historical Perspective

To understand the real point of the story of David and Goliath, we must put this account in a historical perspective of the nation of Israel.

We go all the back to Abraham when God promises him that He would make his descendants a great nation, and that **"I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed"** (Genesis 12:3). As we see Goliath cursing Israel and the God of Israel, a dark cloud is already hanging over the head of the blasphemous Philistine when we get to his encounter with David.

Israel was enslaved to the mighty nation of Egypt. They were miraculously delivered by the power and strength of God.

After Israel was delivered from Egypt, they approached the land God had promised them. Spies were sent in and they reported back how it indeed was a wonderful land **"flowing with milk and honey"**. However, ten of twelve spies also reported how the **"...The people who live in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large; and moreover, we saw the descendants of Anak there"** (Numbers 13:28) **"The land through which we have gone, in spying it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants; and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great size.**

³³ There also we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak are part of the Nephilim); and we became like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight" (Num. 13:32-33).¹ Although God instructed the people to take the land, and He promised He would be with them and give them victory, because

of fear the people refused to proceed. They feared the strength of the military and the size of the giants they faced. Because of their fear, lack of faith, and disobedience, that generation wandered for forty years and died in the wilderness.

As the next generation prepared to enter the land, Moses challenged them,

"It is the LORD your God who will cross ahead of you; He will destroy these nations before you, and you shall dispossess them. Joshua is the one who will cross ahead of you, just as the LORD has spoken... The LORD will deliver them up before you, and you shall do to them according to all the commandments which I have commanded you. Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or tremble at them, for the LORD your God is the one who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you." (Deut. 31:3-6).

The book of Joshua records how Israel defeated their enemies, not because of their size or military might, but because God was with them in battle. The book of Judges records time and again how God delivered Israel through a leader or band of men much weaker and smaller than their enemies and with weapons which must have seemed foolish at the time.

Only a Boy Named David

It is with this historical perspective we come to the account of David's defeat of Goliath found in 1 Samuel 17. The armies of the Philistines and the nation of Israel are arrayed on hilltops with a valley in between. The Philistines send forth a champion,

Goliath, nearly ten feet tall. Much detail is given describing his armor and his training as a warrior (1 Sam. 17:4-7; 33). He seemed to be an unbeatable foe. Twice a day Goliath would come out and challenge Israel's army shouting, **"I defy the ranks of Israel this day; give me man that we may fight together"** (17:10). This was to be a "representative" fight, with the winner giving victory to his side (17:8-9). Reminiscent of the people refusing to go into the Promised Land, Saul and all the army were "dismayed and greatly afraid" and no one would fight the giant.

David, sent by his father to deliver supplies and check on his brothers, hears the blasphemous taunts of Goliath. David knew the history of God's faithfulness we just reviewed. David remembered how God had delivered him from both a lion and a bear as he protected his family's flocks. In spite of his brother's taunts and King Saul's doubts, David goes out to confront the giant. Refusing Saul's armor and sword, the conventional weapons of warfare, David goes forth armed only with his shepherd's staff and sling. He does so with faith that God would deliver the giant into his hand:

This day the Lord will deliver you up into my hands, and I will strike you down...that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the Lord does not deliver by sword or by spear; for the battle is the Lord's and He will give you into our hands." 1 Samuel 17:46-47

Of course we know the rest of the story. David brings down the giant with his sling and then takes Goliath's head with his own sword. In doing so, God provides Israel a great victory through the faith and courage of this young man.

Lessons for Us

As we consider this exciting account, we must ask what the main point of this story is. What are the lessons for us?

1. Realize the Battle is the Lord's

When he look at both the historical perspective and how the life of David points us to Jesus Christ, the main point may be summed up in David's words, **"The battle is the Lord's"**.

We are not called to fight an armed conflict like David or the nation of Israel. You might think you face a political, moral, or social battle. However, we face a spiritual struggle. This was described by Jesus during His trial: **"My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm."** John 18:36

Paul further describes our conflict: **"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places"** (Ephesians 6:12).

The greatest enemy we face is that of Satan and sin. Each of us have sinned and as a result are defeated, under God's righteous wrath and judgment. Yet we have One who went to battle on our behalf! Jesus Christ went to the cross to suffer and die on our behalf. He rose again to defeat sin and death. When we repent and trust Christ, we are given His victory over this greatest enemy. Certainly our "Champion", like David seemed an unlikely hero. Yet "God chose the manger over the royal palace, humility over pomp and circumstance, the foal of a donkey over an armed chariot, and the cross over the crown".² God chose **"the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and...the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong..."** (1 Cor. 1:27).

2. Use the Weapons God has Provided

Since we are in a spiritual battle, Paul outlines the weapons that are required in Ephesians 6:11-18: Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil... The belt of truth; the breastplate of righteousness; the Gospel of Peace; the shield of faith; the helmet of salvation; the sword of the Spirit (the Word of God); and prayer. These may seem like unlikely weapons as you face challenges in the capitol. But it is vital to use these weapons God has provided as you face the conflict and struggles in your life.

3. Step Out in Faith and Obedience

The greatest practical lesson we may take from this account is that through faith we can step out in obedience to do what God has called us to do. We see how God has been faithful in Scripture. We see how He has been faithful in our own lives. We can go about the challenges of our daily lives or service in the capitol remembering "The Battle is the Lord's"!

¹ We must note that Goliath is a descendant of these "sons of Anak".

² Riccardi, Mike. *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: Interpretation vs. Application*. <http://thecripplegate.com/preaching-christ-from-the-old-testament-interpretation-vs-application/>

BIBLE STUDIES

Lobbyists / Staff: Tuesdays, 12:00 Noon

Legislators / Elected Officials: Thursdays, 8 AM; 12:00

TREASURER 'S CONFERENCE ROOM (EB 54)