

Let No One Lose Heart

1Samuel 17:1-58

It is likely safe to say that most of us see war as a bad thing.

Of course because there is great evil in the world sometimes war is necessary because it is unloving to allow injustice and wickedness to have its way over people if we have the power to stop it.

That said war always happens on account of sin and so it brings a great deal of suffering and death.

One of the things that bothers me about war is that many times the people responsible for war are not the ones doing the fighting, suffering, or dying?

It is often far too easily for someone to sit in an office nice and secure having never had to suffer or sacrifice for anything and send young men and women out to the battlefield.

Because that is the case some people have thought It would be nice to have the leaders of a country fight each other to decide who wins the war.”

Have you ever thought that?

The upside is obvious right? Instead of many thousands of soldiers dying only a handful of people die or maybe even just one person dies.

While there are many problems with the idea it seems quite good to spare massive amounts of carnage and destruction.

Of course this is not a new idea, it has been around for a very long time.

It is this idea that sets the stage for one of the most famous events in the Bible, the fight between David (a young man from a small town called Bethlehem) and Goliath (a giant of a man from a city called Gath who was a proven warrior on the battlefield).

[This text has some very important lessons for us as believers. Lessons which we ought to delight in and meditate on for the good of our souls. We need these lessons. We need them because every single one of us has been or will be tempted to lose heart (that is hope) in our lives and we need to hear the main exhortation in this passage to the people of God which is “Let No One Lose Heart”. Towards that end we want to focus in on five lessons from this chapter. Number one...]

Point #1 – It is easy to be fearful of great enemies. (Verses 1-11)

Because both spiritual and physical weakness are common to the human condition it does not take much to make us afraid.

The opening verses of this chapter tell us that the Philistines came to fight a war with the Israelites and they come right into the heart of Israel.

The two armies gather on two opposite ridges with a valley in between.

Neither army is going to go down into the valley and try and climb the hill on the opposite side to start the fight because they would get annihilated trying to go up the hill.

If the battle is to be fought it depends on both armies going down into the valley to fight each other.

Both sides make camp set up the battle lines and then a Philistine named Goliath steps out from the ranks.

Verses 4-7 describe him. He's nine feet tall, some scholars think he was a bit shorter at seven feet in change, but even at seven plus feet he is massive.

He is more than tall, he is incredibly strong.

His armor coat weighed 125lbs. That is like carrying another person as you fight.

The head of his spear weighed 15lbs. Anybody here ever try and use a 15lbs sledge hammer? Can you imagine wielding that as a spear?

He must have been incredibly strong to use his weapons effectively.

With that in mind we read this (**Verse 8-10**).

He will act as the Philistine representative and he asks someone to act on behalf of Israel.

We read the reaction in **verse 11**.

Even Saul, who remember is a good foot taller than everyone else, is “dismayed and terrified” at the thought of fighting this enormous man.

That is an easy thing to happen.

I know we are tempted to read this and look down at the fear of the Israelites, but listen this can easily happen to us.

[A few years ago I listened to a sermon on this text, I think it was by Matt Chandler. He made the excellent point that we are the Israelites. Most of us want to think of ourselves as David, many sermons are preached encouraging people to be David, but that fact is we are the Israelites.]

You may say, “Wait a minute!” I'm no quaking in my sandals Israelite, I'm not afraid.

I would just caution you with that thought and ask, “Have you really had to face a Goliath?”

Have you really been tested by something or someone that is that big?

Do you really appreciate who the true enemy of your soul is?

[My guess is if you can't see yourself as a fearful Israelite, then you probably haven't faced anything that big and you probably greatly underestimate the power of sin, death, hell, and the devil. All of which make Goliath seem small by comparison. It is easy to be fearful of great enemies. Secondly....]

Point #2 – God sends his chosen servants to face great enemies. (Verses 12-30)

Because the LORD resolves to overcome everything opposed to Him, He will always make a way to bring an end to those who seek the harm His people.

According to verse 16, the standoff between the two armies lasts forty days.

Every day the armies take up their positions and twice a day Goliath would come out to “defy”/taunt the Israelite army challenging them to send someone out to fight.

Verses 12-15 tell us that the three oldest sons of a man named Jesse were in Saul’s army and his youngest son David (who was also in Saul’s service to play music and be an armor bearer) went back and forth from his father’s house looking after the sheep to Saul’s court.

Because the army is camped for such a long period of time, Jesse charges David with bringing supplies to his brothers and their commander and to bring back news of the situation.

In order to get the significance of that we have to remember the previous chapter where David was anointed (chosen by God) to be the next king of Israel.

It is also important to know that Israel’s king was to act as God’s representative to the people and as the people’s representative to God.

In other words, God has chosen David to act on behalf of the people.

I believe the way we need to see this situation is that God uses the command of David’s father to send him to the battle lines.

When he gets there he hears what Goliath has been saying for forty days and we read this in **verses 24-26**.

What David says there at the end is the critical statement. David sees Goliath’s defiance of the Israelite army as something much bigger than human warfare.

He sees it as an act against God and his persistence in bringing up the subject with the other soldiers speaks of his desire to act in the situation.

Even in the face of stern opposition from his oldest brother David persists on the course of wanting to go out and fight the giant.

You see, God has sent his servant there precisely to face this enemy of God’s people.

[Years ago there used to be a show on TV called rescue 911 hosted by William Shatner. Anybody see that show? Why do people phone 911? Because they are in trouble that they can’t handle and they need someone to send people who have the ability to help. No one calls 911 to let the operator know they have it handled.]

One of our biggest problems as people, perhaps our biggest, is that we don’t know enough to know that we need to dial 911 spiritually speaking.

The most foolish thing a human being can do is deny their need of Almighty God. Do you know what is amazing? God sends His servant to face the great enemies of His people before they even ask.

When Goliath comes out and “defies” the army no one thinks, “Hey we better call David in from the pasture to go out and fight this guy!”

No one would make that call, but God does.

[It is the exact same but to a much larger degree for us. When did God send Jesus into the world on our behalf? When we were wonderful and fantastic loving God and realizing how much we need Him? No, what does the Bible say? It says, “While we were still sinners Christ died for us.” That is so good. God sends His chosen servants to face great enemies. Third...

Point #3 – The servant of God entrusts himself to the LORD. (Verses 31-40)

The one sent by God knows that the things of this world ultimately offer no hope; therefore, he rests in the One Who can do all that He pleases.

Someone (who likely knows David and is also in the service of Saul) hears what the young man has been saying and reports it to Saul.

Remember Saul likes David and appreciates his service and that is likely why he sends for him in verse 31.

We hear from David in **verse 32**.

Now we shouldn't have an image of what they used to call a ‘pip squeak’ when we think of David before the king because we know from this chapter that David is a physically strong young man, but nevertheless a young man.

For 40 days Israel's army had been taunted by Goliath and even the bravest and strongest among them was afraid.

David shows up and says “I'll go fight him!”

Of course Saul says this in **verse 33**.

Saul sizes up David's chances and thinks there is no way this boy can carry the day.

David replies in **verses 34-37**.

It's true David has not been to war against other men, but he does have experience fighting things that are bigger and stronger than him.

While it is certainly impressive to kill a lion or a bear in hand to paw combat, what is even more important is the reason David gives for his success.

What does he say? He says, “The LORD...delivered me from the paw of the lion and the bear.”

Let's think for a minute about why David got into it with lions and bears. Why? Because that is his task as a shepherd.

He was doing what God's providence had led him to do and the LORD according to His mercy gave him success.

He says to Saul, the same thing is going to happen here.

Saul knows these things are true because others have told him about David's bravery as a shepherd and so he is convinced and agrees to have David fight Goliath.

In verses 38-39 it says that Saul offers David some of his own tunic and a suit of armor for the fight.

Commentators are divided on Saul's motives here. I believe his intentions are good. He cares about David and wants him to succeed.

David has never worn armor though and quickly comes to the conclusion that it will hinder instead of help so we are told this in **verse 40**.

Into battle he takes a wooden staff, a sling, five stones, and faith.

That is what God's servants do, they entrust themselves to the LORD.

[We see this in the Scriptures and church history. Elijah faces 450 false prophets by faith, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego defy the king and face the fiery furnace trusting in the LORD, the Apostles refuse to listen to those who tell them to stop preaching in the name of Jesus, missionaries like Adoniram Judson who went surrounding by spears and arrows trusted the sovereignty of God over the tip of every single one.]

One of the great mistakes we can make in life is entrusting ourselves to worldly things.

It is both easy and dangerous to following the loudest and strongest among us.

It is our natural inclination to be attracted to those who sound intelligent and eloquent with their words.

Many can be drawn in fine appearance and trendy apparel.

This brothers and sisters is all through the modern church in our culture.

Everyone has a book, program, or formula these days, but how many are trusting in the LORD.

[Do not judge whether not a person is a servant of God based primarily on appearance or charisma. Rather judge them based on how much they trust the LORD. Anyone who says they have a better way than what the Bible describes is no friend to you or the church of Christ. We need to entrust ourselves to the LORD. Number four...]

Point #4 – The servant of God prevails by the power of God for the people of God. (Verses 41-54)

God works through those He has appointed to accomplish His will for the good of everyone that belongs to Him.

As usual Goliath came out and taunted the Israelites, but now after forty days something changed a man of Israel was coming out to meet him.

When David was close enough for Goliath to make some of his features he sees David's appearance, his youth, and his weapons and the end of verse 42 says he, "despised him" saying this in **verses 43-44**.

His reaction is understandable. Verse 4 calls him 'a champion'.

We know from what Saul says in verse 33 that Goliath had been fighting wars for many years.

In his time and experience this giant of a man must have killed many men, many of whom would have been excellent and powerful warriors.

He thinks there is no way this boy armed with a wooden staff and sling stands a chance.

Undeterred by the insults of Goliath David responds in **verses 45-47**.

David is no fool. He knows he is outmanned and outgunned. He knows that he will only prevail by the power of God.

That is exactly what happens. Goliath moves forward to kill David and David 'runs quickly' towards the battle line.

As he is running he pulls his first of five stones out of his pouch drops it in the sling and fires it at the giant.

Just stop there for a second. The sling he is using is a pouch with two long strings that is swung in a circle and at just the right time one of the strings is released allowing the pocket to open and release the stone.

From my research a stone could easily slung at 70 miles per hour, a deadly velocity, but to be accurate with that weapon at all is an amazing skill let alone to do it on a dead run.

David knows this which is why he picked five stones instead of one.

Five is likely all the chances he figured he would get, but as it turned out he only needed one.

On his first shot he hit the giant in the forehead and the stone "sank in" causing the Philistine to fall face down to the ground.

That is significant because if we go all the way back to chapter five we see there that when the Philistines captured the Ark of the Covenant they put it in the temple of their god named Dagon.

Do you know what they found in the morning? They found the statue of their false god lying flat on its face before the Ark.

Just as that statue fell before the LORD so too does this giant.

Why did David's stone hit the mark? Yes he was no doubt a good shot, but this stone finds its place because the hand of the Almighty guided everything necessary for that to happen.

Taking no chances David runs over, takes out Goliath's own sword and removed the head of his enemy.

With that the Philistines run away and the Israelites chase them out of Israel all the way back to the gates of their own cities.

[David wins by the power of God and the people of Israel receive the benefit from it. That brings us to one more lesson and after that we need to see the big picture. So far we've seen that it's easy to be fearful, God sends His servants, the servant of God entrusts himself to the LORD, the servant of God prevails by the power of God for the people of God, and lastly we see that...]

Point #5 – The people of God must know the servant of God. (Verses 55-58)

The LORD makes it obvious who He has sent to act on behalf of His glory and those that love Him are able to see it.

Verses 55-58 highlight the significance of what just happened, listen.

Some folks read these verses and think, "What a minute how can it be that Saul has no idea who David is? He has been in his service playing the harp and it says that Saul likes him."

Reading these verses to mean that David is a stranger to Saul is a misreading of the text.

He does not say, "Who is that young man?" He says, "Find out whose son this young man is."

In other words, David has been in Saul's service but he has simply been one among many.

Let me just ask you, do you know people by their first name but struggle to remember their last?

Can that happen for a long period of time?

Of course because while they are in our circle we simply don't know them very well.

David's killing of Goliath changes all of that.

David is no longer one armor bearer among many, he is the man who took down the giant that no one else was willing to face.

Not a man in that army let alone the king would ever forget that day, nor would they forget David's name or what family he was from.

That is how it is with people who do big things like this.

[Anyone know the name Alexander Graham Bell? Why do you know that name? Did you know there was another man who invented the telephone at the exact same time? Anybody know his name? His name was Elisha Gray. He is relatively unknown because he didn't get

the patent. That is how it is, we remember people associated with great events and forget the others.]

God makes it crystal clear in this moment who His servant is. It is David son of Jesse.

This, however, is so much bigger than David. All of this is pointing to Christ.

That is why we need to see ourselves as the people of Israel here rather than the hero, because if we go the other way we will miss the biggest lesson of all from this chapter.

We have fearful enemies. Sin, death, and the devil. They are giants far more powerful than us.

Thankfully God has sent His servant into the world to face our enemies for us.

Of all the servants of God, no one entrusted Himself more to the LORD than God's One and Only Son.

1 Peter 2:23 says, "When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly."

It is only by the power of God that He endured the cross, it is by the power of God that the wrath of the Almighty was poured out on Him and was satisfied for everyone who belongs to Him by faith, it was only by the unsearchable power of God that He was raised from the dead and exalted to the highest place.

He prevailed by the power of God for the people of God.

Because of that God has made His name known and it is only by knowing Him that we are saved.

It is that Name that is above every name. It is the Name of Jesus Christ and we will all bow down to Him as Lord either under judgement or to the joy of eternal life.

David was a hero, a servant of God, but brothers and sisters we need someone better on our side. We need the one to whom David's battle with Goliath points us too. We need Jesus.

If we know Him as saviour then we truly know a saviour we can trust in and therefore never lose heart.