

1 Samuel 17:31-58

The Battle is the Lord's

Introduction

People of God, in last week's sermon we began to look at the story of David and Goliath – the climactic Old Testament story that perfectly illustrates war that exists between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent.

The Philistines gathered their army at a place called Ephes-dammim – which means the “Boundary of Blood” – identifying themselves as those who are known for violence and the shedding of blood. The Israelites gathered their army at the Valley of Elah, the Valley of the Oak. Oaks signify where God's covenant promises are made, renewed, and remembered.

Thus the two camps signify the way in which the war between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman is going to be fought. Violence and shedding of blood on the one hand, and those who trust in the covenant promises of God on the other hand.

We also met the Philistine Giant Goliath from Gath wearing his dragon scale armor, mocking the armies of the living God. And in face of his taunts and threats we also witnessed the cowardice of Israel under Saul's leadership, and the timidity of Eliab rebuking the very zeal in David

that should have burned in his own heart. And then we concluded the sermon with an important question – “Is there not a cause?”

In a day when we face a violent enemy who seeks to enslave and destroy us, is there not a cause for bold and zealous men to rise up? Yes—there is a cause. And there is a way to defeat such an enemy through righteous, godly, and courageous action.

Today I want us to see how that cause—the cause of Christ—is advanced in the story of David slaying Goliath. This account is not mere ancient history. It is a typological prophecy of Christ’s victory over sin, death, and the Devil. But it is also a divine pattern for how God spreads Christ’s victory through His people.

Yet before we see the victory, we must first grasp the most crucial lesson of all—how not to fight. For the greatest danger to the people of God is not the strength of the enemy, but our temptation to battle on the world’s terms.

Refusing Saul's Armor: The Temptation of Worldly Methods (17:31-39)

When Saul heard David's words, and saw that he was zealous to fight the Giant, he sent for him. David declared,

"Let no man's heart fall because of him; your servant will go and fight this Philistine."

But when Saul lays his eyes on the young David, he analyzes without the eyes of faith. He says, "You can't win!" Goliath has been a warrior from youth while David is just a youth.

But David's time as a shepherd striking down bears and lions which attacked his father's sheep, was exactly the training necessary to fight against this uncircumcised Philistine. He too will be like one of those beasts because he has defied the armies of the living God. "The LORD who delivered me from lion and bear will deliver me from this Philistine."

Convinced, Saul says, "The LORD be with you" and gives David his armor.

Taking Off Saul's Armor

Saul's armor is described just like Goliath's—bronze helmet, coat of scales, sword. Why does this matter? Israel had wanted a king like the nations, a man who would fight their battles. Saul was their "giant," head and shoulders taller than all the rest.

Yet he shrinks from facing the Philistine, refusing to fight against him, yet he is willing to clothe himself in the symbols of the Philistine warrior.

Saul's armor mirrors Goliath's because his rule, now abandoned by God, is energized by the same satanic source. Plagued by an evil spirit, Saul himself has become another serpent in the land, destined to be crushed.

This is why David's refusal to wear Saul's armor is so significant. **It teaches us that God's people must never take up the weapons of their enemies.** The Left, clothed in dragon's scales, lies, steals, kills, and destroys like their father the Devil.

But we do not fight that way. We do not repay violence with vigilante violence, or vengeance with vengeance.

“Vengeance is mine,” says the Lord. So we cry out to Him to destroy the wicked and vindicate His people. This is the very purpose of the imprecatory Psalms: “*Arise, O LORD, in Your anger... Let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end, but establish the just*” (Psalm 7).

In recent weeks, after the assassination of Charlie Kirk, the Left tried to paint both Left and Right sides as violent. Yet the conservative Christian Right did not answer blood with blood. The Left projected their own malice onto us, fearing

a violent retaliation while being the violent ones. But the Lord has taught us: "If you live by the sword, you will die by the sword."

For that reason, I am thankful that our side has not clothed itself with Saul's armor. We must not repay evil with evil or reviling with reviling, but bless, that we may inherit a blessing. Still, more attacks will come. And when they do, I urge you: do not put on Saul's armor. God's people are to fight differently.

David's Weapons: The Power of God's Word (17:40-47)

Instead of using Saul's armor and weaponry, David gathers five smooth stones from the brook. The number five likely points to the five chief Philistine cities. But it could also point to the fact that Goliath had four Giant Brothers that David's mighty men killed in 2 Sam. 21.

Or perhaps there's a symbolic connection between the five stones and the five books of Moses. Israel's true weapon against God's enemies is the Word of God. I think there is something to that.

There is a repeated emphasis on "hand" throughout this narrative. The Lord's hand delivered David from the lion and bear, and David trusts that same hand will deliver him from the Philistine. David takes his staff in his hand,

carries his sling in his hand, reaches his hand into his pouch, slings the stone with his hand, and—having no sword in his hand—takes Goliath's sword to cut off his head.

What is the emphasis here with the hand? Deuteronomy 6 commands Israel to bind God's Word upon their hands and write it upon their foreheads.

Here that commandment is dramatized: from David's hand, a stone—signifying God's Word—flies true and strikes the giant in the forehead, felling him. It's a vivid picture of God's Word triumphing over His enemies. As Luther said, "one little word shall fell him."

Armed with Smooth Stones

God's people must fight with the smooth stones of His Word. Paul reminds us in 2 Corinthians 10: "The weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ."

Some now say that the age of free public debate is over—that we should avoid proclaiming truth in hostile places lest violence follow. Yet the Apostle Paul did not shrink back. He preached Christ to hostile peoples who sought

his life, knowing that there is no peace between Jesus and Satan, between righteousness and wickedness. Wherever Paul went, bold proclamation shook the world, and through it, God saved many.

So too in our day. Though hatred rises and violence spills into the streets—even in tragedies like the assassination of Charlie Kirk—God is even now calling men and women out of darkness. Some who see this evil will refuse to join it and will turn instead to Christ. His Word never returns void.

Therefore let us not forsake the smooth stones of God's Word. Let us preach boldly to both enemy and friend, knowing that the Gospel in the hand's of God's servant is more than sufficient to bring down every giant that rises against His kingdom.

In the Name of the LORD of Hosts

Before the battle comes the clash of worldviews—a collision between two kingdoms that reveals the spiritual reality behind every earthly conflict.

David says:

"You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against 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... 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 save with sword and spear. For the battle is the LORD's, and he will give you into our hands."

Notice the fundamental contrast: Goliath trusts in weapons of bronze and iron. David trusts in the name of the LORD of hosts—the God who commands heaven's armies. The giant boasts in his own strength and threatens death. The shepherd boy proclaims God's glory and promises victory.

Here lies the difference that determines every battle's outcome: the struggle is never ultimately about weapons, wealth, or worldly strength. It is about who honors the living God and who defies Him. Those who acknowledge His sovereignty and bow before His throne will inherit the earth and reign with Him. Those who shake their fists at heaven and mock His name will perish like the beasts they have chosen to become.

This is why David can run toward a 10 foot giant armed with nothing but a sling—he carries the name that is above every name. This is why the church can advance against the gates of hell with confidence—we march under the banner

of the King of kings. And this is why every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord—because the battle belongs to the LORD, and His victory is certain.

The Victory: One Little Word (17:48–51)

After all the buildup, the battle itself ends in a moment. David runs toward Goliath, reaches into his bag, slings a stone, and strikes the giant's forehead. The stone sinks deep, and Goliath crashes face-first to the ground. With no sword of his own, David seizes Goliath's, and with the enemy's weapon, cuts off his head.

This is no contradiction to the truth that we do not fight with the world's weapons. Rather, it is a picture of God turning the enemy's own sword against him. Satan's greatest weapon was death, enslaving mankind through fear of death. But when Christ submitted to death on the cross, He used that very weapon to crush the serpent's head.

David carried Goliath's head to Jerusalem—perhaps even to the very place later called Golgotha, “the place of the skull”—where Christ would die and finally deal the fatal blow to the dragon. Through His death and resurrection, Christ stripped death of its sting and transformed it into the gateway of resurrection and eternal life.

Remember that Goliath had said that if the Philistines win, Israel would be their slaves. But if Israel wins then the Philistines will serve Israel. Hebrews 2 declares, the devil once held men in lifelong slavery through fear of death. But Christ has shattered that slavery by His death and resurrection. Death itself has become the believer's servant, delivering us into glory. To live is Christ and to die is gain.

This is the deep mystery planned before the foundation of the world. As Paul said, had the rulers of this age known that killing Christ would be their own undoing, they would never have crucified the Lord of glory. The enemy imagines that by killing the righteous he silences them. Yet martyrdom only amplifies their witness. They think that by killing us they remove our influence in the world.

But Revelation 20 shows the martyrs—"those beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the Word of God"—enthroned and reigning with Christ for 1000 years. Far from stopping their reign, death exalts believers to share in His heavenly rule, by which Christ's kingdom continually comes on earth as it is in Heaven.

The only sword Satan wields is death, and Christ has taken it from his hand. For the Christian, death becomes resurrection, and enthronement. In the hand of Christ,

the sword of death has become the smooth stone that fells the dragon and delivers the people of God to victory.

Pursuing the Enemy (17:51-54)

After David chopped off Goliath's head, the once boastful and confident army of the Philistines became afraid, and fled. And the once fearful army of Israel, regained their confidence, arose with a shout, and pursued the Philistines as far back to Gath and Ekron, and they plundered their camp.

And the lesson here is quite clear. As the army of the living God, we must follow our Lord in his victory and chase down the rest of his enemies until he puts them all under his feet. This includes our own sin, of course, but also the sins that are in the world. As our Baptism Liturgy says:

We must fight valiantly against, and overcome all sin, the world, the flesh, the devil, and his whole dominion, all the days of our life. This begins in us, but it extends out into the world.

The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the Devil. Or, as Joy to the World says: He comes to make His blessings flow, as far as the curse is found.

Christ has crushed the Serpent's head; and now the Body of Christ must rise with a shout and pursue the enemy until every stronghold falls and every square inch of all creation bows to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Three Principles for Pursuit

First: The Battle is Already Won

The army of Israel was let loose to pursue the Philistines because David struck down the giant.

This is our position today. Christ crushed the serpent's head at Calvary. Satan's power is broken, his accusations silenced, his hold on death destroyed. When we face the giants of our age—the lies that assault truth, oppose righteousness, mock our faith, and murder our people—we don't fight *for* victory. We fight *from* victory.

Second: We Fight with God's Weapons

David refused Saul's armor, showing we cannot defeat enemies by adopting their tactics. God has established three spheres where we must fight according to His order:

The Family: Form strong families through marriage, children, and faithful child-rearing. Husbands love wives as

Christ loved the church; wives honor husbands as the church honors Christ.

The Church: Fight through Word and sacrament, prayer and worship, confronting lies with Christ's truth. Preach the whole counsel of God, call sinners to repentance, extend mercy to enemies.

The State: God has appointed magistrates to punish evildoers and reward good (Article 36, Belgic Confession). Paul says in 1 Tim 1 that the law is good when one uses it lawfully, for the punishment of evil doers. Then in 1 Tim. 2 Paul goes on to urge prayer for those in positions of authority so we might lead peaceful, quiet lives—presupposing that criminals face just punishment according to God's law.

Third: No Retreat from the Public Square

Third, we have allowed pietistic Christianity to cripple our theology of the public realm. Isa. 33:22 says that the Lrd is our judge, lawgiver, and king. He will save us. So Christians have then taught that because Jesus is our only savior, that we should not seek to be faithful in offices of public service. The Government can't change the heart. Just preach the gospel.

Yes, our ultimate hope rests in Christ alone—but we've abandoned the very institutions God designed to restrain evil in the world, handing them to the ungodly, because only Jesus saves?

Young men, this withdrawal has been catastrophic for our national Christian discipleship.

When Christians abandoned government, law enforcement, military service, and courts of justice, we get exactly what we see: evil called good, justice perverted, innocents punished, guilty freed, and our nation at the verge of civil war.

The Gospel is not Jesus is Lord therefore do nothing. The Gospel is Jesus is Lord, therefore occupy until He comes. He called us to pursue the enemy, and break down the gates of hell wherever the curse is found.

A Call to Arms

This moment that we are in right now demands men with spines of steel who will resist weaponized empathy—that manipulative tactic which prioritizes criminals' feelings over people's safety. The establishment wants leaders who bow to sob stories, apologize for enforcing law, and treat our nation's enemies better than our own citizens.

We need leaders who understand that true compassion means protecting our communities by crushing those who would destroy them. We need law enforcement who see their badge as a calling to defend civilization itself. We need military personnel defending not just geography, but our people's right to exist according to the Christian principles that built this nation. We need politicians governing for their own people first, not according to globalist emotional blackmail.

The time for weak men is over. We need men who love their people enough to be called cruel by those who hate us.

Young men: your families need you to rise. Your communities cry out for leaders with backbone and biblical conviction. We desperately need mayors, commissioners, sheriffs, deputies, officers, judges, lawmakers, and governors with moral courage.

Every one of these callings is sacred vocation when pursued with in light of the Gospel of Christ. These aren't "secular" jobs—they're frontline positions in the cosmic battle between good and evil.

Do you care enough about your neighbor, your children, and future generations to engage in the hard work of

governance that protects them from those who would do them harm?

For too long we've been losing ground in the culture war because good men convinced themselves that faithfulness means staying home while wolves devour sheep. That time is over.

Young men, I call you to see public service as Christian mission. Law enforcement, military service, and righteous legislation are high callings—practical expressions of loving your neighbor as yourself.

The sword of the Spirit changes hearts; the sword of the state restrains evil. Both are needed. When righteous men refuse to govern, unrighteous men gladly take their place.

So rise up, O Men of God. Lift the shout of victory. Christ has crushed the serpent's head. So take the Word in your hand, and pursue the enemy without fear. For the battle belongs to the Lord, and His Kingdom shall prevail, for death itself is our servant. Amen.