

FIVE STONES OF COURAGE

I Samuel 17

INTRODUCTION: Historically - the chief virtue taught by ancient educators was courage. It was one of the primary objectives of education. In our modern system you don't hear a lot about it, perhaps it's because we don't think we face it the way they did. They may face a lion on the streets... they may die because of the cold of winter... what about the plague... we don't live in that world anymore.

I have found that our fears are different, but they are just as real. But it's a deeper more persistent fear -

- **I grew up during the cold war** - It was like living life with an invisible gun held to your head and some Russian's finger on the trigger.
- **Today it's terrorism** - We live with the persistent possibility of what could go wrong.
- Then there are things like **Layoffs**. Some of you lay awake at night gripped with fear over what your employer might do.
- **Doctor's Reports**. Mom and Dad how many of you watch your kid like a hawk and analyze every twitch in his eye. How many of you have lost a night's sleep because of something you read on the internet?
- The **Unknown** - Some of you are gripped with fear because of what your spouse might be doing. You have no evidence, you have know reason to doubt... but you do.
- **Opinions** - Some of you live your life afraid of what others might think.

Today's sermon is all about finding the courage to overcome fear. **It's from the classic text of David and Goliath.**

But, if there was ever a text of scripture that has been misinterpreted, misapplied, misunderstood - it is this famous passage. This is the text that the coach pulls out when the little league team is about to play the champs. The kids who drive to the game, with peach fuzz all over their face. That's when we talk about David and Goliath.

Well I'm going to show you how to use it correctly...

COVENANT - God made a covenant with Abraham - To give him a land AND to bless the whole world through his offspring. The text called it his Seed... not his seeds plural, but one particular Seed. Abraham divided the animals and God passed through the torn pieces as if to say - may God Himself be torn to piece if He doesn't remain true to this covenant. Abraham's role in the covenant was to wear the **sign of circumcision** on himself and all of his sons. Every verse that follows has the echoes of the covenant.... As a matter of fact, it is virtually impossible to make sense of the OT apart from a grasp of God's Covenant with Abraham.

THEOCRATIC SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT - The last time we were together we saw there the covenant people had claimed the land God promised them. The time of the Judges spanned some 400 years. They had a Covenant Promise and they had a Law... the Levitical Priests were given the duty to ensure that the people were keeping God's Law appropriately.

The People However Desired a King like the other nations.

So they are rejecting a **THEOCRATIC** System of Government for a **MONARCHY**.

God tells Samuel to give them a King and he gives them Saul. Saul was supposed to work very closely with the Levites and administer the Law of God, but Saul thought he was above the Word of God and choose to do things his way.

God says, "I will now find a King after my own heart" that is.. a King who will value MY WORD above his own. MY NAME above his own.

God gave them David, the son of Jesse, the grandson of Ruth - who we studied last week.

It was a marvelous story how God led Samuel to David... but as is often the case there is a period of time that passes between David's anointing by Samuel and David actually taking the throne.

The story of David and Goliath happens during that time period.

This was the day that David made one of the most important leadership decisions of his entire life.

- It is this one act of courage would propel David to the ranks of leadership in the armies of Israel.
- It is this one act of courage that would place David by marriage into the royal family.
- It is this one act of courage that would cause his heart to be knit together with his best friend Jonathon.
- It is this one act of courage that would create a cult following for David where the women would begin to sing, "Saul has slain his thousands, but David his 10's of thousands."
- It is this one act of courage that would place him strategically in the minds of the people so that by the time he is 30 he would be seated on the throne of the Kingdom.

TEXT: 1 Samuel 17:1–54 (ESV)

¹ Now the Philistines gathered their armies for battle. And they were gathered at Socoh, which belongs to Judah.

Why did it belong to Judah? God said it did! God decreed it so!

² And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered, and encamped in the Valley of Elah, and drew up in line of battle against the Philistines. ³ And the Philistines stood on the mountain on the one side, and Israel stood on the mountain on the other side, with a valley between them. ⁴ And there came out from the camp of the Philistines a champion named **Goliath** of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span. ⁵ He had a helmet of bronze on his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail, and the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of bronze. ⁶ And he had bronze armor on his legs, and a javelin of bronze slung between his shoulders. ⁷ The shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron. And his shield-bearer went before him.

- Goliath was over 8ft tall.
- The detailed description of his armor isn't only showing how massive he was but it is communicating that he had the best of cutting edge military technology.
- His armor weighed more than me, over 250 lbs.
- The armor made out of bronze which when the sun hit it shined into the eyes of the Israelites and blinded them.

Goliath was intimidation incarnate.

⁸ He stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, "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. ⁹ If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will be your servants. But if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall be our servants and serve us."

So this was a common approach in this time - choose a Man who will fight on behalf of the all... if the man wins... the entire army will be treated as though they have won. If the man loses the entire army will be enslaved. But what ever this one man does will be imputed to the whole. If the warrior is courageous - the entire army will be treated as though they were courageous. If the warrior is a coward - the entire army will be treated as though they were cowards. It's called imputation.

David was home tending his father's sheep... but David's father sends David on an errand to deliver Bread and Cheese to his brothers who were at the battle. So basically, When he arrives David hears Goliath taunting the army of Israel.

²⁶ And David said to the men who stood by him, "What shall be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel? ***For who is this uncircumcised Philistine***, that he should defy the armies of the living God?"

NOW - that's very important.... Do you see where David's mind goes? **Covenant!!!** David says, "wait a minute, this giant has no covenant right to this land".

- This text has been the source of countless half time locker room talks.

- Behold the power of positive thinking!
- Parents point to this text and say, “see there you can do anything if you just have courage!”
- See there, the bigger they are the harder they fall - go get ‘em tiger!

I want you to see in this text that there is more to it than that. God said one thing, Goliath said another thing - DAVID IS TAKING GOD’S SIDE.

This battle isn’t really David against Goliath, it’s Jehovah, the covenant keeping God of Israel against Goliath.

That doesn’t transfer directly to your kid’s little league team.

³² And David said to Saul, “Let no man’s heart fail because of him. Your servant will go and fight with this Philistine.” ³³ And Saul said to David, “You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him, for you are but a youth, and he has been a man of war from his youth.” ³⁴ But David said to Saul, “Your servant used to keep sheep for his father. And when there came a lion, or a bear, and took a lamb from the flock, ³⁵ I went after him and struck him and delivered it out of his mouth. And if he arose against me, I caught him by his beard and struck him and killed him.

So for David it was simple - those LAMBS belong to my father, God empowered me to protect my Father’s property... who do you think you are taking my Father’s lambs? This LAND belongs to my Heavenly Father - who do you think you are taking my Father’s LAND?

³⁶ Your servant has struck down both lions and bears, and this **uncircumcised** (outside the covenant) Philistine shall be like one of them, for he has defied the armies of the living God.” ³⁷ 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.**” And Saul said to David, “Go, and the Lord be with you!”

1 Samuel 17:38–39 (ESV)

³⁸ Then Saul clothed David with his armor. He put a helmet of bronze on his head and clothed him with a coat of mail, ³⁹ and David strapped his sword over his armor. And he tried in vain to go, for he had not tested them. Then David said to Saul, “I cannot go with these, for I have not tested them.” So David put them off.

⁴⁰ Then he took his staff in his hand and chose five smooth stones from the brook and put them in his shepherd’s pouch. His sling was in his hand, and he approached the Philistine. ⁴¹ And the Philistine moved forward and came near to David, with his shield-bearer in front of him. ⁴² And when the Philistine looked and saw David, he disdained him, for he was but a youth, ruddy and handsome in appearance. ⁴³ And the Philistine said to David, “Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?” And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. ⁴⁴ 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.”

⁴⁵ Then David said to the Philistine, “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.** ⁴⁶ **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,** ⁴⁷ and that all this assembly 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.**”

⁴⁸ When the Philistine arose and came and drew near to meet David, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine. ⁴⁹ And David put his hand in his bag and took out a stone and slung it and struck the Philistine on his forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell on his face to the ground. ⁵⁰ So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and struck the Philistine and killed him.

Where Does Courage Come From?

1. Rehearsing God’s Past Faithfulness

David had a mental resume for the faithfulness of God.

The single greatest encouragement for you to trust God today is looking at how God was faithful yesterday. That’s why it’s a good idea to journal, keep track of your prayers and how God answers them. Some of you should start a blog - not to build an audience and make money, the only person who has to read it is you.

Tell stories of God’s faithfulness to your kids. In doing so you are giving them a point of reference when they face challenges.

2. Operating in your particular strengths -

Saul’s armor and weaponry was the best Israel had to offer. He tried to transfer it to David, but if David fought the battle in Saul’s strengths it would have gone very differently.

David knew that in order to fight at his best, he had to operate in HIS particular strengths.

The ironic thing is that David’s strengths uniquely exposed Goliath’s only weakness.

Trust the fact that God sewed you up the way he wanted. He placed particular

gifts, talents and abilities in you for a reason. Embrace that - own it and fight in it.

3. Living out God's Agenda

David never saw his own success as of supreme importance - He saw himself as one part of a MUCH bigger plan.

Take the time to orient yourself to God's agenda. What is God's agenda? Turn sinners into saints. Taking people who are far from God and making them disciples of Christ.

So - when you enter in to that business meeting, look around that table and remind yourself, this is NOT about your personal dominance... this is about God's mission.

That turns enemies into prospects. Our battle is NOT against flesh and blood...

Whoever you see as a threat - God sees them as a mission field. If you can see that, it will erase your fear.

4. Concern about God's Reputation -

Over and over again, David says, "I come to you in the name of the Lord".

Now when you see that in the bible it doesn't mean the actual NAME Jehovah, or Yaweh, or Jesus... When we are praying over our food and we say, "in Jesus name - amen". It isn't because we think a little bit of magic is associated with saying that name.

Here is what it means - Name = Reputation. So when David says, "I come in the name of the Lord" he is saying, I fight in God's reputation.

What was God's reputation? Well did you read Exodus? Did you read Joshua? Did you read Judges? In all those books God was building a name a reputation - He was always faithful to his covenant people.

The key to courage is to not worry so much about your Name and Reputation and operate in God's name and reputation.

That means you will operate with integrity - trusting God for the results.
That means you will not cut corners - because God is a God of excellence.
That means you will give it your best - because God is worthy.

5. Looking at God's Hero

Most of the sermons I've heard on this text basically say - now, you go be like David. But remember - anytime we see a hero in the bible we are to remember that he is a type, a shadow of a greater Hero.

Hebrews in chapter 12 tells us to look at David, remember his faith and trust God... that's good... but it also tells us to set our eyes on Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.

Let me show you something -

When you read this story don't always put yourself in the place of David. Put yourself in the place of the thousands of soldiers trembling on the sidelines.

Because you see - One Greater than David battled one Greater than Goliath.

Jesus like David fought and defeated Satan, Sin, Death, Judgement, Hell

And like David he fought not just for us but in place of us...

So what Jesus accomplish is IMPUTED to you. It's as if you accomplished it.

When fear grips you - look to that David. Look to Jesus... and ask yourself what can my Goliath do to me in light of Christ's work.

- Kill me? I will rise again.
- Embarrass me? I'm about God's reputation not mine
- Defeat me? I may be temporarily defeated, but the mission of Christ will be accomplished ultimately - that's all that matters.

Fear not - He has overcome the world

⁵¹ Then David ran and stood over the Philistine and took his sword and drew it out of its sheath and killed him and cut off his head with it. When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled. ⁵² And the men of Israel and Judah rose with a shout and pursued the Philistines as far as Gath and the gates of Ekron...

They looked at David and they found courage - you look to Christ and do the same.