

THE BATTLE IS THE LORD'S!

"Then Saul dressed David in his own tunic. He put a coat of armor on him and a bronze helmet on his head. David fastened on his sword over the tunic and tried walking around, because he was not used to them. "I cannot go in these," he said to Saul, "because I am not used to them." So he took them off. Then he took his staff in his hand, chose five smooth stones from the stream, put them in the pouch of his shepherd's bag and, with his sling in his hand, approached the Philistine. Meanwhile, the Philistine, with his shield bearer in front of him, kept coming closer to David. He looked David over and saw that he was only a boy, ruddy and handsome, and he despised him. He said to David, "Am I a dog, that you come at me with sticks?" And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. "Come here," he said, "and I'll give your flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field!" David said to the Philistine, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the LORD will hand you over to me, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head. Today I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give all of you into our hands.""

Of all the stories in the Bible, the fight between David and the giant Goliath is probably one of the most well-known. Even unbelievers are fascinated by it. As popular as the story is, it is also equally misunderstood. People love it as a picture of the little guy winning over the big guy. But that is wrong. In this story the big guy beats up the little guy. The big guy in this story is not Goliath and the little guy is not David. The little guy is Goliath and the big guy is the Lord. **"All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give all of you into our hands."** And the same is true in your life. The battles you face really are the Lord's and he will win them for you.

I. David's battle was the Lord's battle.

Here is the context for you. The Philistines had gathered for battle against Israel. As 1 Samuel 17 opens up, both sides had their armies facing each other on opposing bluffs with a valley and stream in between. One day a Philistine, a giant name Goliath, walked out into the middle of the valley and challenged the Israelites to send out their best man and do battle one on one. Whichever side loses will become slaves to the victors. Not a single Israelite took up the challenge, not even Saul who was well known for his courage and was the tallest Israelite. Twice a day Goliath challenged the Israelites, and this went on for forty days.

Now why was it that no one, not even Saul, took up the challenge? They forgot about God. They saw only swords and spears and a giant against whom there was no match. Goliath stood nine feet tall with the strength to match. His suit of mail weighed 150 pounds. His shield was so big that another person had to carry it. The tip of his spear weighed twenty pounds. I had a friend who had a sixteen-pound sledge hammer as the door stop to his office. I couldn't hold it straight with both arms for very long.

The Israelites obviously were afraid, except David. David wasn't a soldier. He happened upon the battle front quite by accident. He was sent there with a simple care package for his three older brothers in the army. While there, David heard the challenge of Goliath and went to King Saul to volunteer. **"You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a boy, and he has been a fighting man from his youth."** Saul was right, but David pointed out how God protected him the past as he killed lions and bears to protect the sheep, and he trusted the Lord would protect him now. Saul consented but insisted that David wear his armor which David tried on. It must have looked like an eighth grader trying to wear an offensive lineman's equipment. David couldn't fight that way. He took them off, grabbed his staff, sling, and five smooth stones, and ran out to face Goliath.

Goliath saw David coming and was insulted. It would be like asking a CPA to add two and two together. Goliath started to curse God in heaven. But David wasn't scared. Sure, he knew that he was no match for Goliath, but Goliath was no match for the Lord. **"All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give all of you into our hands,"** he cried out to Goliath. You know the rest. With one swing and one stone, David felled Goliath. With Goliath's own sword he chopped off his head. The Philistines fled and the Israelites chased them and the road to Philistia was strewn with Philistine dead. Goliath was killed not because he was overconfident or that David was lucky, but because God fought the battle for David.

II. The battle the Lord fought with Satan.

And he fights your battles, too. In fact, he already has. He took on the biggest giant of them all, the devil. Satan is a mighty warrior, stronger, smarter, more cunning than any of us. He knows the Bible better than we do (remember how he quoted passage after passage in his temptations of Jesus). He is a fallen angel and remember how one angel destroyed Sennacherib's army. He is a roaring lion looking for anyone to devour. We are no match.

Jesus, on the other hand, appeared weak before the devil. When the devil faced Jesus in the wilderness, Jesus had fasted for forty days and nights. He was physically and emotionally weak. When the two clashed in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus appeared weak. His sweat was like drops of blood falling from his face.

But Jesus prayed and he trusted God. **"Not my will, but yours be done,"** he said. He sought strength from God and received it. And later, on the cross, hear the cry of triumph from Jesus' lips, **"It is finished."** The great work of redemption was done. The devil bruised his heel, but Jesus crushed his head. He destroyed his work, **"not by sword or spear,"** to use David's words, or to use Luther's, not with gold or silver, but with his holy, precious blood and innocent suffering and death.

That was the battle the Lord fought for you. As a result, we no longer have to fear the gates of hell. God's anger for sin has been absorbed in Christ who became sin for us. Death was defeated and life and immortality have been won for us in Christ's own resurrection. Satan is conquered. Jesus even descended into hell to rub Satan's face in it and proclaim that God had won the battle.

III. The battles we face are the Lord's.

And the Lord continues to fight our battles. Just think of all the battles fought your entire life. Looking back we can see God's victorious hand in them. But now try to imagine the battles that lie ahead of us. And you know what, we don't know what they are. Like David who simply brought a care package to his brothers and before he knew it was fighting Goliath, we don't know what lies ahead. And we have to remember one thing: our struggles are ultimately against the devil. As Paul states in Ephesians 6, **"Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."**

Modern warfare targets not only the soldiers but also the citizens. Think of the cities bombed in World War II or terrorist attacks today. One attacks the citizens to demoralize them, to take away their willingness to fight. The devil failed in his struggle with Christ, so now he takes the battle to us, his followers, the citizens of his kingdom. Just look at Job. Robbers killed his servants and stole his flocks. A natural disaster killed his family. He came down with a terrible disease. But who was behind it all? Review again Job chapter one. It was the devil. We may struggle against illness and cancer and spiteful neighbors and evolutionists and temptation, but ultimately every struggle we have is against the devil.

He uses the same tactics. He bullies the Christian. He does a lot of teasing. Think of the boasting that comes from the evolutionists and scientists who say that the Bible is nothing at all and that there is no god. Think of the false teachers and religions out there who try to lead people away from God. It's OK to be religious, but those who want to cling to the truth of the Bible are isolated and called ignorant and arrogant. Persecution is still rampant where anything Christian is shunned by society. Goliath's curse still is cried today. **"Come here," he said, "and I'll give your flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field!"**

And how weak we are. The spirit may be willing but the flesh is weak. We are plagued by a sinful nature that resists God. Peter and his two friends slept instead of praying with Jesus in the garden. Peter denied him to save his own skin. We often fail to pray. We too often fail to stand up for the truth. We too often are embarrassed of Jesus. We too often give in to temptation. Like the Israelites we stand across the valley afraid.

Friends, don't trust in yourselves. David tried to do things the conventional way by trying on Saul's armor only to find out that it simply would not work. We can't do battle against the devil in the conventional way with money and mind power and brute strength. We will fail. Instead, trust in God. Trust his word because it is the truth and God-breathed. Trust his promises which the Bible is full of. And listen and do and believe everything he says. **"Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints."** Then we will discover that one little word can fell the devil.

Your struggle in life and in the year to come isn't the little guy fighting the big guy; it is the big guy, the Lord, fighting and beating up the little guy, the devil. The war is already won. Christ defeated the devil for you. Now it is just a matter of endurance and patience as we wait for the return of our Lord. Trust in your Lord and he will save you. You see, it is his battle, not yours. Even if it seems we are losing, we are really winning. And wait. Soon it will be all over and we will stand triumphant on the Last Day. INJ Amen.