

"Let No One's Heart Fail."

Let me invite you to step into the message of this familiar story first of all through the words of David. In **verse 32**, "*David said to Saul, Let no man's heart fail because of him.*" This introduction to the famous battle between David and Goliath helps us identify a primary lesson from the story. We saw last week that *while man looks on the outward appearance, God looks on the heart*. What we see here is the kind of heart God looks for. It is a brave heart. At least that's part of it.

We need to hear this because loss of heart is a major issue for us all. *What are your fears? What causes you to lose heart?* Sometimes when I think of fear, I think of an intense, high-stress situation that causes the heart to beat faster, but in this story, it is really the opposite that happens. The Israelite and Philistine army set out for battle. They come within sight of each other on opposing ridges over one of the prettiest valley's in Israel, the valley of Elah. We don't know what's going on in the hearts of the Philistines, but the Israelites are afraid in a way that doesn't cause them to run away. It just sort of causes them to shut down and do nothing. Their hearts fail them, but it is not that they are terrified; it is more that they are immobilized. Has that ever happened to you? People talk about fight or flight syndrome. Sometimes people don't do either. They just shut down. They lose heart and start living on autopilot day after day. That's not good.

One of the first lessons in this famous story is that

I. A BRAVE HEART IS CRITICAL EQUIPMENT FOR THE BATTLES OF LIFE.

Earlier in the chapter, Goliath was described as a *Champion*. The Hebrew word literally means a man between the lines. It means he went out between the two lines and challenged the enemy to send a man to fight him one-on-one. There is some debate about how to translate the ancient weights and measures in the description of Goliath and his gear. We can't be dogmatic about the exact height of Goliath or the weight of his equipment. ¹ What's clear is that he is enormous and seemingly unstoppable. Archaeologists note that male skeletal remains from the biblical period have an average height of less than five and a half feet. Goliath was huge. But it's not just his size that's impressive. He is equipped with high tech armor and multiple state-of-the-art weapons.

David shows up, just a teenager² Sent by his father to bring food to his older brothers and he takes in what is happening and says this has to stop! *Let no one lose heart.* David here is giving us one of if not the most often repeated commands in the Bible: “Do not be afraid.” Do not lose heart! This is the word God gave us in **Joshua 1:9** *Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.*” Jesus prepared us for the reality of trouble and spoke about your heart in **John 16:33**. He said In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”

Some people think it is unhelpful and even insensitive to quote Bible verses to fearful people. It isn't always best, timing, context, wisdom, and compassion, all of that is important. But it's clear in the end that God, who knows us best and loves us most, doesn't hesitate to tell fearful people facing actual troubles to take heart. There is a place in the Psalms where, in the *King James Version*, David says, *I would have lost heart had I not believed.*³

Earlier this year, a blogger wrote: *Cowardice is a typical feature of people in a bourgeois country like ours. Properly trained, we make the best soldiers in the world. Untrained, we're afraid to tell people at work we're going to a Bible study because they might think we're weird.*⁴ Plato and Aristotle placed courage among the four cardinal virtues. Aristotle placed it first. Some have argued that he placed it first because without courage, none of the other virtues survive. C.S. Lewis put it like this, *courage is not simply one of the virtues but the form of every virtue at the testing point. A brave heart is critical. It is critical for you. Whatever you face, do not lose heart. As Jesus put it, take heart. So, of course, the question is “How? How do you do that?”*

Look at what happens next In verse 33, Saul says you cannot do it. 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.”

It is in what he says in response to this that David *reveals that*
II. A BRAVE HEART IS BORN OUT OF FAITH IN GOD.

Saul is focused on Goliath's power and on David's weakness. David is focused elsewhere. A brave heart is focused on God and faith in God.

First,

A. We have to look back at what God has done.

Verse 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.* David talks about how as a shepherd he had to defend the sheep against lions and bears. His focus however is not that he has proven his prowess but that God has proven faithful. David does what we often do when we apply the Bible to our lives. We look at a particular story and try to see the principle. We realize that in the stories of what God has done in the past principles are revealed that apply to our lives today. The same thing is true in our lived experience – that's what David is seeing. He says in that past God protected me. I believe he will do so again. Have you ever had God answer a prayer, meet a need, or protect you from danger? If you have stories of God's deliverance in your life, don't forget those past demonstrations of God's care and protection.

We have to look back at what God has done and...

B. We have to look up at who God is.

A little later in the story, in **verse 45** we read, *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.* David says I know who God is, and I know who I am, and we are in relationship to Him. *He is the LORD of hosts, The LORD— who is the God of armies.* That name is often translated *the LORD Almighty.* And David adds, *the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.* God wants you to take heart because you know what he has done and who he is.

C. We have to lean into these truths.

Have you ever seen a fearful child whose mother or father looks them in the eye and says, "Don't be afraid, trust me, it's going to be alright," And the sobs get choked back, there's a deep breath, the shoulder lift a little, and there's some childlike courage. Of course, if there is *no* trust in or relationship with the Mother or Father at all, it's no good. But if there is a deep trust somewhere in the heart, it can be called up and called for. Jesus did that. In **John 14:1**, he said, *"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God: believe also in me."* There is the famous story of Jesus asleep in the boat while there is a storm on the Sea of Galilee. The disciples are afraid they will all drown. When they wake him in a panic, he asks them a question: "Where is your faith?"

They had faith. It was in them. But they were not applying it in *that* situation. The choice to trust, to believe, to have faith in God, makes the difference.

A Brave heart is critical for all of us, and it is born out of faith in God. And there's something else we learn here...

III. A BRAVE HEART, BORN OF TRUE FAITH, IS WISE IN UNCONVENTIONAL WAYS.

Verses 38-40 *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.*

A. The wisdom of a brave heart is unconventional

I'm sure it must have seemed obvious to some that it would be better for David to wear Saul's armor. It was probably the best there was. But part of being focused on God is learning to have the freedom, *because* you trust in him, to let him use who you really are and to work through your strengths instead of trying to fit into someone else's idea of what is best. That's wisdom even when it looks unconventional.

Courageous wisdom often seems unconventional but

B. The wisdom of a brave heart is not irresponsible.

Verse 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.* The research I've seen on this says that the shepherd's sling was strong, sturdy braided leather that could throw a stone as big as a baseball. A good man with a sling could throw that stone with great power and accuracy. So David chooses five smooth stones from the stream and stepped out to face Goliath. And he killed him and cut off his head.

Bruce Waltke's daughter used to like to play David and Goliath with him. Her favorite part was when she got to cut off his head. But in order to get to that part, she would act out the battle. She had a stocking and a Ping-Pong ball that she used for her sling. She would put the ball in the stocking, say, "the battle is the Lord's" and sling it the best she could. Usually, the ball would bounce off the walls not coming anywhere near her Father, but he would fall down and then

she would stand with one foot on his chest and pretend to cut off his head. Sometimes she would get excited and forget to say "the battle is the Lord's" and he wouldn't fall down. He would explain that David's faith was in God. Sometimes she would try again, and she would run into the room and shout "*the battle is the Lord's,*" but she would forget to sling her Ping-Pong ball. So he wouldn't fall down. He would explain that David's faith in God didn't mean that he didn't have to use his sling the best he could. She had to do two things to win the victory. She had to say, "*the battle is the Lord's*" and she had to use her sling. Faith is not trusting in your own strength, but it is not just waiting passively for God to do something. It is putting all your trust in God and then trusting in God, you do what you can with what you have.

What battles are you fighting? Are you asking God to help you defeat some enemy of your own making in some battlefield of your own choosing? If so, maybe you need to lay down your weapons and quit throwing stones! Or maybe, there is a way to so submit to his good causes that you line up with him. Then his battles are yours, and yours are his. If so take heart. You have to take heart, or you can't do anything else. Choose faith, set faith to work on your heart so that you grow strong in him. Then look for the unconventional wisdom that comes from a brave heart that is based on faith in God. Fight hard but fight with faith, God's way with God's wisdom.

A brave heart is critical for the battles of life. It is born out of authentic faith. It is wise in unconventional ways and what else?

IV. A BRAVE HEART, BORN OF TRUE FAITH, KNOWS SALVATION COMES FROM THE LORD.

Listen to David's speech to Goliath. Beginning in **verse 46**, he says, *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.*

There are two kinds of confidence. Goliath had confidence in himself, his brute strength, and his great gear. He's so sure of himself, **verse 42** says when he first lays eyes on David coming for him, he disdained him for he was a *youth, ruddy and handsome*. That Biblical scholar I have referred to, Robert Alter, He thinks the word *ruddy* might apply to red hair. He says, the Hebrew word order here is arranged to mimic Goliath's perception and thought process. He translates it like this: *You sent a mere boy, an egregiously redheaded pretty boy at that!*⁵

Robert Alter also points out that there are only two places in 1 Samuel where David is described as ruddy the last time and only other time was at his anointing. He may look unimpressive, but The Bible is reminding us of something Goliath doesn't see. Goliath has superficial self-confidence. David has the anointing of God and faith in God.

In **verse 47**, David says, what took place, happened for a purpose: *that all this assembly may know that the LORD saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the LORD's.*" This story is written that you might know something. ***When the battle is the LORD's – the victory is ours. We must believe that and not lose heart.*** The greatest lesson of the story is not that David was courageous, and we should be like him but that David had a relationship with God in which God was His Savior. That gave him strength and a brave heart.

CONCLUSION.

It is interesting that earlier in the chapter when Goliath is introduced, he is described as wearing scales. Some versions say *chain mail* or *scale armor*, but the Hebrew word is simply "scales." When David cuts off his head, the Bible wants us to remember the promise of **Genesis 3**. There is a serpent loose that threatens God's people. But God's anointed will crush its head. David gives us a picture of what God has done for us through Jesus. David went into the battle alone to fight and win the battle for his people. But David is ultimately just an imperfect picture of the true Savior. Jesus is the true champion, the hero of heroes who fought and won *for* us all on the cross. He didn't just risk his life for us; he gave his life for us. He doesn't save by sword or spear. God saves us by his grace.

Grace is undeserved mercy and love. God gives his grace to everyone turns to Christ as Lord and trusts in Him. Jesus, the most unlikely hero, deals the deathblow to your unbeatable enemies *for you* through his own death on the cross. He rises again not only as our Savior but also our true king. Trust him as your Savior. Then because he is your Savior commit to his causes. ***When we are committed to God's causes, we must never lose heart, because if the battle is the LORD'S, the victory is ours.*** God says, *"I am bigger than your biggest enemy, failure, mistake, weakness, danger, and challenge. Trust me, I will be your strength and your Savior. I'll save your soul and make you more than a conqueror, so do not lose heart."*

Amen

Prayer of Response

Lord of host and Holy Savior search our hearts. Show us where we have lost heart or are tempted to lose heart today. Help us to see Jesus, our true champion and only Savior, with eyes of faith - to see his outstretched hand and hear his call to take heart as we follow him. Teach us what and how to believe, that we might be brave and bold for you. Amen.

¹ Goliath's stature as described in various ancient manuscripts varies: the oldest manuscripts, the [Dead Sea Scrolls](#) text of Samuel, the 1st-century historian [Josephus](#), and the 4th-century Septuagint manuscripts, all give his height as "four [cubits](#) and a [span](#)" (6 feet 9 inches or 2.06 metres), whereas the [Masoretic Text](#) gives this as "six cubits and a span" (9 feet 9 inches or 2.97 metres)

² It is believed that if he were older, he would have been conscripted into the army.

³ Psalm 27:13-14: There are some words missing in the text here requiring readers to rely on context for the meaning. Translations vary, but Psalm 27:13-14 captures the relationship between faith and heart.

⁴ <https://warhornmedia.com/2018/01/03/makes-tim-keller-uncomfortable/>

⁵ Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, p.81