

## Four Keys To David's Courage

### Introduction:

- I. Nathan Hale was a young man who died at the age of 21. He was captured in the beginning of the American Revolutionary War and found guilty of being a spy without the benefit of a trial. General William Howe of the British Army ordered Hale to be hung. He asked for a clergyman, but he was refused. He asked for a Bible but he was refused. The noose was slipped around his neck, but before it was tightened and he became the first martyr in the American fight for freedom, he stood calmly with no visible signs of fear and said, "My only regret is that I have but one life to give for my country." That's courage. Most of us greatly admire those throughout history who have demonstrated great courage. But courage is not just something people needed in the past. It is an essential quality for us today. It takes courage to make decisions based upon conviction and not convenience. It takes courage to say no when everyone else in the crowd is saying yes. It takes courage to do what is right when the multitudes are doing wrong. It takes courage to be good in a world gone bad. It takes courage to allow yourself to be led by the wisdom of God when most people are being led by the wisdom of this world. It takes courage, ladies and gentlemen, to be a Christian.

You see, as Christians we are in the midst of a battle. It is a conflict between the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness. It is a battle for the minds of men and women everywhere. And in this battle we need people with courage. We need individuals who have the courage to stand up for what is right and to speak out against that which is wrong. We need those who have the courage to stand with Christ and against the devil. We need men of courage and women of courage. Listen to me: we need courageous fathers and we need courageous mothers. We need leaders who are courageous enough to lead and we need members who are courageous enough to follow. We need young people who are courageous even to be different and older people courageous even to show them how. If there is one thing that the church needs today in this world dominated by sin, it is courage.

Now, how do we attain this courage? Well, one way we can attain it is by following biblical examples that have been set before us. With this in mind, I want to look with you in this lesson at one of the most popular examples of courage that we find in the Bible. It is the example of David and it is found in **1 Sam. 17**.

- II. There are few stories in the Bible that are as well-known as this one. It is a story that illustrates how God can give us courage, even when the odds are against us. Today we are going to explore the reasons for David's

courage, and my hope is that this will help us to have courage too when we face the obstacles of life.

When we come to 1 Samuel 17, we see a battle between the people of Israel and the Philistines. Saul, the Israelite king, has his men on one hill while the Philistine army occupies a hill opposite of them and so there is a valley between them. One of the Philistine warriors literally stands head and shoulders above the rest. His name is Goliath. This man was over 9 1/2 feet tall. He wore a coat of armor that weighed at least a 125 pounds and he carried a spear that had a point which weighed about 25 pounds. In our text, this giant of a man issues a challenge to the Israelites (**1 Samuel 17:8, 9**).

The idea is simple. Goliath is the champion of the Philistine army and he wants to fight the champion of Israel. Whoever wins that match, wins the war. This would save a lot of time and a lot of lives, but the Israelites are not excited about the idea. The Bible says, *“When Saul and all Israel heard those words of the Philistine, they were dismayed, and greatly afraid.”* They knew that it would be suicidal to go up against this giant, not only for the individual, but for the nation. From their perspective, there is no way that Goliath could be beaten. Verse 16 says that Goliath kept issuing his challenge every morning and every evening for forty days, but no one in Saul's army dared to accept it.

Then along comes David, one of four sons of Jesse. He is but a teenager at this time. His three brothers are with Saul on the front lines. Jesse tells David to take some food to his brethren and David complies. As he arrives on the scene, David quickly becomes aware of the situation. As he was talking with his brothers, Goliath comes out and shouts his usual defiant words, at which point the Israelites flee from his presence (**1 Samuel 17:23, 24**) and the Bible points out that David heard the shout of Goliath. As David begins to question the situation, his eldest brother Eliab becomes angry and rebukes David. But no matter, David has already put it in his heart that he would take on Goliath. This is certainly a very courageous decision. So let's look at the reasons why David was not afraid to fight Goliath. There are four keys to his courage that we want to observe this morning.

## **Lesson:**

### **I. David Wasn't Intimidated By Goliath.**

Goliath had been successful in intimidating the whole army of Israel. He had not put a scratch on anyone, but they were terrified of him just because of the way he looked and sounded. But David is not afraid just because Goliath is nearly ten feet tall. When David sees and hears Goliath

he did not shrink back in fear. Instead he said, "*Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?*" (**ver. 26**) David's response is "Who does Goliath think he is? You see David viewed this thing as a terrible mismatch. Is David underestimated his opponent? No! To do that can be a fatal mistake in battle. There is an old saying that says, "*Fools step boldly where angels fear to go.*" Sometimes people appear courageous just because they underestimate a situation. "*I'm not afraid to do that,*" may mean someone doesn't understand what *that* involves. Sometimes a wise person is afraid. As Captain Ahab said in *Moby Dick*, "*I don't want anyone on this boat who is not afraid of whales.*" Listen: we ought to have some fear concerning what Satan can do. Don't underestimate the devil. He's crafty and when it comes to deceit, he rules supreme. When it comes to tempting people with evil, Satan has no equal. We don't want to ever take him lightly.

But, a brave person doesn't overestimate the strength of an enemy either. He is not intimidated just because someone claims to have superior strength. Goliath not only had a great physical physique, he felt that he was invincible, and you could hear and see it in his swagger. That was enough for the faithless Israelite army, but it wasn't nearly enough for David. Goliath may have been a huge man, but a man he was -- just a normal, ordinary man. He put on his pants one leg at a time just like David and the Israelites did. David understood this and so he understood that Goliath could be defeated just like any other man.

Listen to me: we need to be able to see opponents for who they really are. Even the Cowardly Lion in the *Wizard of Oz* was not afraid once he realized that the great Wizard really just a man behind the curtain. Most of the things in life that terrify and intimidate us aren't nearly as tough as we give them credit. Let me tell one thing that often intimidates the people of God – this is a giant that we all face from time to time – it is the importance in our own mind of what others think. Someone says, "I have friends in denominational churches and what will they think if I speak of the true church of the Bible?" "I work with folks who aren't very religious and what will they think if I speak the truth on moral issues like abortion or fornication, etc.?" "The world has a social concept of the gospel and the church, and what will they think if I say the work of the church is spiritual, not social?" "If I live true to myself and the convictions of my heart, what will people think? That, ladies and gentlemen, is the language of those who are intimidated by the giant of pleasing men.

Listen to me: I don't mean to be unkind but the truth is the opinion of man really isn't all that important (**1 Cor. 4:1ff**). It doesn't really matter what someone else might think; what counts is what God thinks. Remember what Paul says in **Romans 8:31**, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" I'll tell you right now, if you stand for the truth there is going to be

someone in error that has bad things to say about you. If you speak out against immoral practices this society of ours today will respond by treating you with spite. But so what! They can't defeat you if you are on God's side. Don't be intimidated by the world and what they might think. As a matter of fact, don't be intimidated by any of the giant obstacles of life. I don't care if it is financially related, family related, health related, job related, etc. There isn't any obstacle in life that is too big for God to handle.

## II. David Remembered What God Had Done In The Past.

When David first appeared before Saul, Saul objected to David being the one to fight Goliath.

*1 Sam. 17:33 - "And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art but a youth and he a man of war from his youth."*

What was David's response to Saul's objection? David tells him how, as a shepherd, he killed both a lion and a bear.

*1 Sam. 17:35 - And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him."*

Then David says, *"If I can handle lions and bears, Goliath is not going to be any problem."* But here is the real key. David understood that his victory over the lion and the bear was not due to his own strength, it was due to the fact that God had been with him and had delivered him.

*1 Sam. 17:37 - "David said moreover, The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine."*

David learned from his experience as a shepherd that God could protect him and could give him the strength to defeat foes which were much stronger than he was. He saw no reason why the Lord would not do the same thing as he went out to face Goliath.

Now, all of this involves the matter of faith. God had worked providentially in the life of David. Now, the providence of God is not a very tangible thing. We cannot always tell when a specific act is due to God's providence, but I'm persuaded that more times than we think, God has a direct hand in our lives. I'm not talking about anything miraculous. I'm talking about God working in accordance with natural laws to deliver us from trouble. Think about David's situation. God, so far as I know, never communicated to David, that it was He who delivered him out of the paw of the lion and of the bear. David believed it by faith. David believed that

God was watching over him and that gave him courage. We must have the faith to believe that in past times of our life, when we have found our way out of some kind of peril, that God indeed had a hand in our deliverance. Paul, like David believed that such was the case in his life (**Acts 26:19-22**). Paul believed in the providence of God. Thus, he recognized that in times past God had delivered him out of trouble, and so he would do in again (**2 Cor. 1:8-10**). We need to trust God. God is not going to leave us in times of need; He's going to watch over us. Experience has taught us that! We may never have killed a lion or a bear, but I know many of us have learned from experience that God can be trusted. That enables us to have courage when we face new challenges and difficulties in life. The problem is we sometimes forget what God has done for us. So then, like David, remembering what God has done for us in the past should give us courage for today and for all the future.

### III. David Understood God's Power.

In Psalm 20, David wrote, *"Now I know that the Lord saves his anointed. He will answer him from his holy heaven with the saving strength of His right hand. Some boast in chariots and some in horses, but we will boast in the name of the Lord, Our God..."*

Those are powerful words from David. We don't have to go through life in fear, regardless of the circumstances that we face. Why? Because we understand the power of our God. We understand that He is omnipotent. We understand that there is nothing greater than our God, in heaven or in earth. And so like David said, when we boast, it is not going to be in self or in men, but in the name of the Lord, our God. People today boast about many things. Some people boast because of the job that they have. Some people boast because of their education. Some people boast they come from an affluent family. Some people because they are so strong physical. Some people boast because they are pretty or because they are handsome. But David said, we will boast in the name of the Lord, Our God. Why? Because He is the only One who can consistently deliver us from our trials and tribulation. He is the One who consistently see us through the darkest hours of our life. He is the One who furnishes us will all of our needs and more. And so we glory in God.

Now, when we keep the power of God in the forefront of our minds, we will face the giants of life courageously. When David goes out to meet Goliath, he is met by the cruel taunts of this gigantic man. *"Come to me," said Goliath, "and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the bests of the field"* (**1 Sam. 17:44**). But David responded eloquently (**1 Sam. 17:45-47**). We have already seen that David did not overestimate Goliath's strength, now we see that he didn't underestimate God's power either. He realized that God's power is much greater than the strongest ar-

my in the world. The Lord will always defeat His enemies. He will always accomplish His purposes. Sometimes it appears to us that He is taking His time in doing so, but it is indeed His time, and there is no one or nothing that can keep God from doing what He wants to do, when He wants to do it. As **Psalm 115:3** says, "*Our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases.*" I encourage you to study the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter of Revelation. You may not understand all of the symbolism of the chapter, but you will walk away with the understanding that God is on His throne and He is in control. And you can believe that when David stood under the giant shadow of the man named Goliath of Gath, he was very much aware of the fact that it is God that reigns supreme, and we today ought to forget that fact. You see, when we forget that God is on His throne, and we lose sight of the ever-present power of God, we faint under any kind of hardship in life. But when we remember the power of God, and that, as Paul once said, "that power that worketh in us," we will have the kind of courage that David had when he went up against Goliath.

We live in an age of anxiety. A few years ago many were worried about over-population and nuclear winter. Now it's global warming. But what we need to understand is that nothing is going to happen which surprises God, and nothing is going to happen that we can't handle with His help. I don't care if all the computers in the city go out and we lose power throughout the city, there will be no need to panic. God will still be on His throne working out His plan.

Let me ask you this morning, what are your fears today? I know that some of you are concerned about health problems. Maybe you had some tests this week and the doctor said, "that something doesn't look quite right; we will have to run some more tests." Whenever that happens it is very hard not to be afraid. Others of you feel very anxious about the future. Maybe it uncertainty at work. Perhaps you have an important decision about school, a career, or purchasing a home. These are all things over which folks lose a lot of sleep. Maybe there is someone in this room who is not a Christian; not a believer in Jesus Christ. You know you should receive Christ as your personal Lord and Savior by obeying the gospel, but you are afraid to do that. You are afraid what other people are going to think. You are afraid because you don't know how it will change your life. Others of you are following the Lord; in fact, you have been a Christian for quite a few years. Maybe you are still afraid to preach the gospel to the world. You are afraid they might laugh at you, or totally reject you. Or maybe you have been asked to teach a Bible class, but you were afraid to say yes. You are afraid because you have never done that before and afraid that you might not do as good a job as the last teacher. Maybe you have been asked to lead singing or word a public prayer or wait on the Lord's table, but you are just too afraid to do it. Like the lion of the Wizard of Oz, you need to find some courage somewhere. Well I tell you where to turn first.

Turn to God. Remember the power of God and that He is still seated on His throne and He will help you through the things that you are worried about if, and this is crucial, if you will trust Him to do so.

#### IV. David Was Properly Equipped.

If we want to have courage, especially as we battle with the Devil, we are going to have to have some weapons. We must be equipped for the battle. And please take notice of the fact that not just any weapons and armor will do. David found that out (**1 Sam. 17:38-39**). Listen: if the weapons that we choose and the armor that we wear isn't important, David would have been off to the battle. But David realized that if he was going to defeat Goliath, he had to be properly equipped.

We too must put on the proper armor. Today our enemy is the Devil. He uses the weapons of this world against us. And the temptation to each of us is to fight him back with the same weapons he uses on us. Don't do that! You will be as hampered as David was in Saul's armor. Paul said,

*"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." (Ephesians 6:12)*

Paul went on to say that we are to use the full armor of God. Here is the armor that Paul described:

- **Truth** - The world uses lies for protection. The world says, "if I'm in trouble, I'll just lie my way out of the situation. But that's no real protection. God's armor involves truth. You want to protect yourself from the wiles of the Devil? Live an honest and unfeigned life. Be honest with yourself and others and even when it might cause a little pain. Paul said, *"...let us therefore cast off the works of darkness and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day..." (Rom. 13:12-13)*.
- **The Breastplate of Righteousness** - To live righteously is to live in a way that is acceptable to God. It is to live with integrity, virtue, and purity of life. It involves, not just right thinking, but right doing. John said, *"...let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous."* Protect yourself against the giants of this world. Arm yourself with the breastplate of righteousness, in good times and in bad.
- **The Gospel of Peace** - The gospel is God's power unto salvation (**Rom. 1:16**). It not only allows us to enter into the good fight of faith, it helps us to stand once we are in the battle. Peter said that we are *"...kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation" (1 Pet. 1:5)*. But the words of Paul indicate something else here. They indicate that we must prepare ourselves to use the gospel. *"And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel,"* Paul said. This ties in to our story

about David. When Saul agreed to let David face Goliath, he armed him with his own armor. It was a fine armor no doubt. It was an armor that was fit for a king. You know that Saul must have had the best armor of all the people. But David said, - *"I cannot go with these, for I have not tested them"* (**Sam 17:39**). David was not prepared to fight Goliath with Saul's armor. He never practiced using a sword. He never walked around with a helmet and a breastplate before. David knew that what he needed was sometime with which he had trained. And so the record says that David took off the armor, took his staff in hand, and picked up five smooth stones and his sling and he was off to face the giant. And I'll tell you something about the David's sling - he knew how to use it! He was prepared to kill a giant with that sling because he trained himself in its use. David had spent years learning to use his sling. Like those 700 left-handed men from the tribe of Benjamin who lived back in the days of the judges (Judges 20:16) he could *"sling a stone at a hair and not miss."* When you have put on God's armor and can use the Word of God like David could use that sling, you'll begin to see giants fall. We must prepare ourselves with the gospel of peace.

- **The Shield of Faith** - This was an important part of David's armor too. It wasn't something that appeared outwardly like a sword or a sling. It rested upon the heart of David, but without it he would have been killed for sure. Faith in God and his power to deliver is what gave David his victory. And faith is what gives us victory too. John said, *"...and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith"* (**1 Jn. 5:4**). When you find yourself face to face with a giant problem in this world, cast your care upon the Lord and believe that He will deliver you? Trusting in God is the only way to assure a victorious outcome in life.
- **The Helmet of Salvation** - It goes without saying that the head is an important part of the body. It has to be protected. Goliath learned that the hard way. He had his 100 pound coat of mail and his spear that had a 25 pound head upon it. He had his shield that was so big that someone carried it before him. He even had on a bronze helmet, but his helmet was insufficient. And David would get that giant with a fatal blow to the forehead. Listen to me: the head is going to the place where Satan first attacks. The devil wants to assault our minds by filling it with worldly, impure and wicked thoughts. We must put on the sufficient helmet of salvation by filling our minds with the proper stuff. Paul said, *"...whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things"* (**Phil. 4:8**). And Peter reminds us to, *"gird up the loins of our mind,"* that is gather up our thoughts nice and tightly and focus them on Christ. Or as Paul said in another place, *"bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."* Do you really want to win the battle? Protect your mind with the helmet of salvation.

- **The Sword of the Spirit (the Word of God)** - The Bible is our sling. With it we can make quick work of the giants of our day. With it we can make the Devil look like a dwarf. Arm yourself with the word of God by knowing what it says and applying it to your life. When you do that, you will be able to overcome any obstacle that arises in your life.

Let me ask you, when in a crisis, what weapons do you choose?

Do you put on the armor of God, or do you grab the weapons of this sophisticated world? Do you say, "trusting God might work at times, but in the real world I need to be practical and do whatever is necessary to protect myself." Weapons of the world might include responses like:

If you face a giant in your marriage, use the weapon of divorce.

If your competitors are unethical in their business dealing with you, use the weapon of compromise in your ethics.

If you suffer from persecution because you choose to live the life of a Christian, then use the weapon of compliance and conform to this world.

These are the weapons used by the world. They don't work, they only weigh people down. Too many people today, both believers and non-believers, are loading themselves down with "battle gear" that they earnestly believe will shield them from the blows of life. Nice clothes. Nice car. Younger looks. Better jobs. Higher salaries. A nicer home. On and on. Yet the irony is that, the more people load themselves down, "equipping" themselves for battle, the more they *restrict* their ability to actually *go* into battle. That's what David experienced when he tried on all of Saul's armor. That's why David said, "I can't fight in this stuff--I can't even *walk around* in it!" You see, the weapons of the world just will not do! If you want to have real confidence and true courage when you face the Devil and other giants of life, make sure that you are properly equipped. Put on the whole armor of God.

## Conclusion

We need people like David in the church today! Some men and women who will stand up and be counted. But remember, it doesn't start in the battlefield. It starts in the sheep field. If you're going to take on giants, you need to get busy standing up to the challenges you face right now. Put God first in your life where He belongs and be courageous. The giants of our day are so bold as to come right into our territory with their taunts. That's what Goliath did (**1 Sam. 17:25**), and that's what Satan will do too. Who will stand up against him and his handymen? It will only be someone who is not intimidated by the giants of life. Someone who will remember what God has done for him in the past. Someone who understands the power of God and who equips himself properly for the battle. I hope and trust that that someone will be you.