

S&L, Episode II: The Pest

Reconnect – July 3, 2011



Text: I Samuel 17:1-57; Romans 8:31-39; Psalm 27

Key Thought: God still gives courage and success to those who work against odds to make things right.

David replied to the Philistine, "You come to me with sword, spear, and javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of Heaven's Armies—the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. Today the Lord will conquer you, and I will kill you and cut off your head. And then I will give the dead bodies of your men to the birds and wild animals, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel! And everyone assembled here will know that the Lord rescues his people, but not with sword and spear. This is the Lord's battle, and he will give you to us!" (I Sam. 17, NLT)

Intro: Canada Day patriotism



Q: Stories of Canada Day – anyone go downtown? Where were the best fireworks?

- It seems that over the course of my lifetime it is more and more fashionable to be Canadian, and to celebrate loud and proud on Canada Day
- I have no memory of ever being dressed up in Canada stuff on July 1st as a kid, but we dress our whole family right up now each year
- Maybe it's something that started after 9-11, but especially coming off the Olympics, it is very cool to be Canadian again – as our Prime Minister said, we are living in the greatest country in the world

Patriotism now and then

- The patriotism of Canada Day is pretty harmless – we rib those of our friends who might not be Canadian, we wear red, we facepaint or get temporary tattoos, we wake up the next morning red and tired and life goes on

- But in Bible times, there was a lot more riding on your national identity – who you were was all about defending your way of life in brutal times, keeping track of your ancestry, guarding your history and your ways – and your religion, especially in times of conflict
- We've been looking at David's life and times – last week we were introduced to him, a young guy living in a difficult time, on the edge of the Iron Age, in a backwards tribe
- The chief rival to David's people were a group called the Philistines – and they had been stomping on them for roughly 300 years, threatening their lives and belittling their customs – and their God – and here they came again...
- It's make or break – a battle of the gods, of ways of life – which God is more powerful? Who is right? The battle will decide...

Hear it again for the first time

Q: What do you think of when you are reminded of the story of David and Goliath? What do you see in your mind's eye? Key facts of the story?



Read text: I Samuel 17

The Philistines now mustered their army for battle and camped between Socoh in Judah and Azekah at Ephes-dammim. Saul countered by gathering his Israelite troops near the valley of Elah. So the Philistines and Israelites faced each other on opposite hills, with the valley between them.

- The Philistines are coming from the area today we call the Gaza strip – to the southwest – and the Israelites are defending from the northeast
- It's a reverse of us in Afghanistan against the Taliban – the Philistines have superior technology (iron not bronze), organization, discipline in the ranks – they originally came to the Middle East from the Aegean – Crete, Greece – they control five major cities in a tight alliance – they are the civilized ones, the city dwellers, the guardians of civilization – and they are there to lay a whipping on the hicks
- The Israelites are the hill dwellers – villages, primitive weapons, not much organization or politics or leadership – their claim to fame is a highly decorated box – and the Philistines know from painful experience three generations before that the Israelite God is not to be trifled with – but they've forgotten the lessons they've learned

- This is a key landmark – the gateway to the rest of the Israelite territory – the Israelites need to hold the line here at this strategic location – it’s very defensible, and so instead of a head-on attack, the Philistines decide to try something else

Then Goliath, a Philistine champion from Gath, came out of the Philistine ranks to face the forces of Israel. He was over nine feet tall! He wore a bronze helmet, and his bronze coat of mail weighed 125 pounds. He also wore bronze leg armour, and he carried a bronze javelin on his shoulder. The shaft of his spear was as heavy and thick as a weaver’s beam, tipped with an iron spearhead that weighed 15 pounds. His armour bearer walked ahead of him carrying a shield.

- “six cubits and a span” – roughly nine feet tall, he is a giant – gigantism – probably eyesight problems, lumbering and not very fast, but super strong
- Probably all the armour bearer could do to carry the shield!
- Goliath has all the latest and best gear/military technology available – he is truly a sight to see

Goliath stood and shouted a taunt across to the Israelites. “Why are you all coming out to fight?” he called. “I am the Philistine champion, but you are only the servants of Saul. Choose one man to come down here and fight me! If he kills me, then we will be your slaves. But if I kill him, you will be our slaves! I defy the armies of Israel today! Send me a man who will fight me!” When Saul and the Israelites heard this, they were terrified and deeply shaken.

- The Philistines are looking for “representative combat” – where instead of two armies battling it out, with all of the loss of life and misery involved, that they each send a champion – it’s war by proxy – and the one that comes out on top wins it for their whole side
- It may be that the Israelites had never heard of it at this time, but that it was something that the Philistines were very much into
- Now, whether or not they would play by the rules, well, that’s another story
- Goliath petrifies everyone who hears him, probably even those on his own side

Now David was the son of a man named Jesse, an Ephrathite from Bethlehem in the land of Judah. Jesse was an old man at that time, and he had eight sons. Jesse’s three oldest sons—Eliab, Abinadab, and Shimea—had already joined Saul’s army to fight the Philistines. David was the youngest son. David’s three oldest brothers stayed with Saul’s army, but David went back and forth so he could help his father with the sheep in Bethlehem.

- David isn’t a kid – he’s a shepherd, he has responsibilities – his three oldest brothers are in the military, but that would likely be Jesse’s commitment to the cause
- He’s likely 17 or 18 – patchy beard and still looking very young, maybe even baby-faced
- Like the movie Saving Private Ryan, no-one was expected to send all their sons, and it’s harvest time anyway – someone has to feed the troops and keep the economy going

For forty days, every morning and evening, the Philistine champion strutted in front of the Israelite army. One day Jesse said to David, “Take this basket of roasted grain and these ten loaves of bread, and carry them quickly to your brothers. And give these ten cuts of cheese to their captain. See how your brothers are getting along, and bring back a report on how they are doing.” David’s brothers were with Saul and the Israelite army at the valley of Elah, fighting against the Philistines.

- David is a messenger boy – sending food, seeing how everyone is doing, bringing back word to mom and dad as to how everything is (no 24 hour news channels there – you had to get your news the old fashioned way)

So David left the sheep with another shepherd and set out early the next morning with the gifts, as Jesse had directed him. He arrived at the camp just as the Israelite army was leaving for the battlefield with shouts and battle cries. Soon the Israelite and Philistine forces stood facing each other, army against army. David left his things with the keeper of supplies and hurried out to the ranks to greet his brothers. As he was talking with them, Goliath, the Philistine champion from Gath, came out from the Philistine ranks. Then David heard him shout his usual taunt to the army of Israel.

As soon as the Israelite army saw him, they began to run away in fright. “Have you seen the giant?” the men asked. “He comes out each day to defy Israel. The king has offered a huge reward to anyone who kills him. He will give that man one of his daughters for a wife, and the man’s entire family will be exempted from paying taxes!” David asked the soldiers standing nearby, “What will a man get for killing this Philistine and ending his defiance of Israel? Who is this pagan Philistine anyway, that he is allowed to defy the armies of the living God?” And these men gave David the same reply. They said, “Yes, that is the reward for killing him.”

- Saul is pulling out all the stops, especially after all this time of inactivity, to try to find someone to take on the giant Goliath – even a tax exemption!
- They are deserting in droves and completely demoralized in the face of such defiance

But when David’s oldest brother, Eliab, heard David talking to the men, he was angry. “What are you doing around here anyway?” he demanded. “What about those few sheep you’re supposed to be taking care of? I know about your pride and deceit. You just want to see the battle!” “What have I done now?” David replied. “I was only asking a question!” He walked over to some others and asked them the same thing and received the same answer. Then David’s question was reported to King Saul, and the king sent for him.

- Peterson says that Goliath’s evil and the fear that comes from him has poisoned everyone on the Israelite lines – that this kind of environment spreads and takes over everything around it – none of them can see anything positive – a gift, enthusiasm, faith – it’s all misinterpreted or perceived as a threat – the power of fear

“Don’t worry about this Philistine,” David told Saul. “I’ll go fight him!” “Don’t be ridiculous!” Saul replied. “There’s no way you can fight this Philistine and possibly win! You’re only a boy, and he’s been a man of war since his youth.” But David persisted. “I have been taking care of my father’s sheep and goats,” he said. “When a lion or a bear comes to steal a lamb from the flock, I go after it with a club and rescue the lamb from its mouth. If the animal turns on me, I catch it by the jaw and club it to death. I have done this to both lions and bears, and I’ll do it to this pagan Philistine, too, for he has defied the armies of the living God! The Lord who rescued me from the claws of the lion and the bear will rescue me from this Philistine!” Saul finally consented. “All right, go ahead,” he said. “And may the Lord be with you!”

- What’s interesting, as many have pointed out, is that there are two giants in the valley of Elah that day – Goliath at nine feet tall, and King Saul of Israel, who was “head and shoulders” over everyone else in Israel – if there’s anyone who should be going out to meet Goliath in battle, it should be Saul... but royal protocol and all that... things to do, places to go – has to check his email and enter in his MFP – and for forty days, he just can’t find the time...
- David is commonly depicted as a boy in this story – but they call him that in relative terms – he’s likely at least 17 by this point, if not a little older – his dad is old enough to be exempted from military service – we make him a kid to be the hero in a kids’ story, but it’s not the case
- Not even Saul would have been crazy enough to actually send a boy out in the battle lines – but Saul is attracted to something in David, the surety of his faith that Saul had used to have – the confidence that comes with it – it’s an attractive thing
- And David has a pretty good resume – not many people I know have killed a bear or a lion – the SPCA at this point is still conducting their investigation, but Saul is convinced there’s more to this punk than meets the eye

Then Saul gave David his own armour—a bronze helmet and a coat of mail. David put it on, strapped the sword over it, and took a step or two to see what it was like, for he had never worn such things before. “I can’t go in these,” he protested to Saul. “I’m not used to them.” So David took them off again. He picked up five smooth stones from a stream and put them into his shepherd’s bag. Then, armed only with his shepherd’s staff and sling, he started across the valley to fight the Philistine.

- It’s not that Saul’s armour doesn’t fit – although here is David, the one already anointed king, being fitted with a king’s armour – but that David hasn’t fought in it – it’s unproven – you don’t change your equipment for game 7 of the Stanley Cup final
- David’s weapons (stick and stones) are God-made, not Philistine made – no tech involved – the stones are smoothed by a thousand years of water, not any human treatment process – you would gather the same kind of rocks if you wanted to build God an altar and worship him – David is using what is holy to work on God’s behalf against the Philistine

Goliath walked out toward David with his shield bearer ahead of him, sneering in contempt at this ruddy-faced boy. “Am I a dog,” he roared at David, “that you come at me with a stick?” And he cursed David by the names of his gods. “Come over here, and I’ll give your flesh to the birds and wild animals!” Goliath yelled.

- This is part of the duel – the taunting and the cursing – and this shows the religious nature of what they are doing – it is a battle between representatives of gods, not just armies

David replied to the Philistine, “You come to me with sword, spear, and javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of Heaven’s Armies—the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. Today the Lord will conquer you, and I will kill you and cut off your head. And then I will give the dead bodies of your men to the birds and wild animals, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel! And everyone assembled here will know that the Lord rescues his people, but not with sword and spear. This is the Lord’s battle, and he will give you to us!”

- David’s amazing response of faith, in spite of the odds against him – he has complete confidence that he is working for God in this and that he’s on the side of the right

As Goliath moved closer to attack, David quickly ran out to meet him. Reaching into his shepherd’s bag and taking out a stone, he hurled it with his sling and hit the Philistine in the forehead. The stone sank in, and Goliath stumbled and fell facedown on the ground.

- Goliath hardly has time to say “sticks and stones may break my bones” before they do, and he’s down on the ground
- Goliath falls hard and David pounces, ready to go and finish him off

So David triumphed over the Philistine with only a sling and a stone, for he had no sword. Then David ran over and pulled Goliath’s sword from its sheath. David used it to kill him and cut off his head. When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they turned and ran. Then the men of Israel and Judah gave a great shout of triumph and rushed after the Philistines, chasing them as far as Gath and the gates of Ekron. The bodies of the dead and wounded Philistines were strewn all along the road from Shaaraim, as far as Gath and Ekron. Then the Israelite army returned and plundered the deserted Philistine camp. (David took the Philistine’s head to Jerusalem, but he stored the man’s armour in his own tent.)

- David’s act of courage inspires the rest of the troops, and they rout the Philistines (who after the duel, disavow Goliath’s promise to become Israelite slaves – they change the rules)

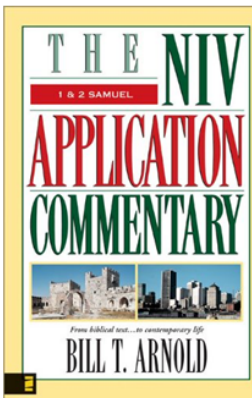
As Saul watched David go out to fight the Philistine, he asked Abner, the commander of his army, “Abner, whose son is this young man?” “I really don’t know,” Abner declared. “Well, find out who he is!” the king told him. As soon as David returned from killing Goliath, Abner brought him to Saul with the Philistine’s head still in his hand. “Tell me about your father, young man,” Saul said. And David replied, “His name is Jesse, and we live in Bethlehem.” I Samuel 17:1-57, NLT

- As a king, Saul has already met David but he wants to know his family – where does this servant come from who can fight and play tunes both? A rocker-fighter? Must have more...

The David difference:

- David sees differently than everyone else, and he knows the way things are supposed to be – he works backwards from the ending, instead of getting stuck at the beginning – a preferred vision of the future is what is at work in his mind and heart

“...I believe that it is especially striking that David sees and hears things that other characters do not. The Israelite troops, for example, see and hear an intimidating infantryman from the Philistine camp, who looks and sounds invincible. David, however, hears and sees only blasphemous defiance of the armies of the living God. Others see reasons for fear and hesitation, but David sees only reasons for taking immediate action. Others see despair, where David sees an opportunity for national vindication against the Philistines and personal advancement in the service of the king.” (Arnold, I&II Samuel, 261)



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Goliath in your life?



- What's the Goliath in your life? It might be something that no-one else can see... a habit that you know is wrong, that is controlling your life, like a closet addiction – or it might be a behaviour, a way that you interact with people – maybe you're bitterly negative, maybe you don't really listen to the people around you, maybe you're a very angry person and you've gotten comfortable being that way

- Or it might be something that is MORE visible – a person in your life you know you need to lovingly confront, or a situation where you need to be strong in the face of temptation, or even a cause that you know is worth fighting for, to help those who can't help themselves
- The thing about Goliaths is, they involve risk – you are daring to do something that could have a very high price tag – and they involve doing God's will – that the outcome will be in line with what God wants for everyone – more love, more justice, more peace at the end of the day
- Not all of our Goliaths are as obvious as coming out and taunting you twice a day, for forty days in a row – they are often more subtle, but just as present in our lives, and just as in need of a good rock in the forehead

Key Thought:

God still gives courage and success to those who work against odds to make things right.

What shall we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us? Since he did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't he also give us everything else? ... And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:31-39, NLT

TAKE IT HOME:

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Romans 8:31-39, NLT



Conclusion: “witness”



- “witness” – what comes to mind with that word?
- In my mind I see someone with a big black Bible, ready to beat love into someone
- We use the word “witness” as a passive one – someone who sees something “go down”, like a crime in the hood, or someone who watches legal documents get signed
- But being a witness is not about just seeing or watching, it’s about the willingness to testify – to talk about what you’ve seen and what you’ve seen done
- That can take courage in a courtroom, and even moreso, to live a certain way in your everyday life – to live your life differently, based on what you’ve seen and personally experienced as to the reality of God in your life
- Sometimes that might mean talking about your faith, and sometimes that might mean leading by your example, and sometimes that might mean taking distinctive or decisive action in the face of injustice or evil – and around the world, it might mean giving your life for the cause of Christ, or your reputation, or your family
- And for that, we all need courage – because it’s easier to live “with the flow” than “against the grain” – it’s easier to simply be a witness of injustice and evil rather than be a witness TO the love and goodness and transformative power of God – to live out your life according to God’s reality

Response: Psalm 27 (group reading)

A psalm of David.

The Lord is my light and my salvation—
so why should I be afraid?
The Lord is my fortress, protecting me from
danger,
so why should I tremble?
When evil people come to devour me,
when my enemies and foes attack me,
they will stumble and fall.
Though a mighty army surrounds me,
my heart will not be afraid.
Even if I am attacked,
I will remain confident.
The one thing I ask of the Lord—
the thing I seek most—
is to live in the house of the Lord all the days of
my life,
delighting in the Lord's perfections
and meditating in his Temple.
For he will conceal me there when troubles come;
he will hide me in his sanctuary.
He will place me out of reach on a high rock.
Then I will hold my head high
above my enemies who surround me.
At his sanctuary I will offer sacrifices with shouts
of joy,
singing and praising the Lord with music.

Hear me as I pray, O Lord.
Be merciful and answer me!
My heart has heard you say, "Come and talk with
me."
And my heart responds, "Lord, I am coming."
Do not turn your back on me.
Do not reject your servant in anger.
You have always been my helper.
Don't leave me now; don't abandon me,
O God of my salvation!
Even if my father and mother abandon me,
the Lord will hold me close.

Teach me how to live, O Lord.
Lead me along the right path,
for my enemies are waiting for me.
Do not let me fall into their hands.
For they accuse me of things I've never done;
with every breath they threaten me with
violence.
Yet I am confident I will see the Lord's goodness
while I am here in the land of the living.

Wait patiently for the Lord.
Be brave and courageous.
Yes, wait patiently for the Lord.