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From Rock to Cornerstone

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During World War II, there was a U.S. Army corporal and combat medic by the name of Desmond Doss. As a Seventh-day Adventist, he refused to carry a weapon due to his convictions. He was mocked, beaten, and nearly court-martialed by his own unit. During the Battle of Okinawa, while others retreated under heavy fire, Doss stayed behind — alone — lowering wounded soldiers down a cliff one by one. He repeatedly prayed, “Lord, help me get one more.” He ended up saving 75 men.

Outnumbered by enemy fire and rejected by peers, Doss trusted that obedience mattered more than acceptance. Many soldiers later said they believed God protected him. Sometimes God fights by sustaining one faithful person in impossible circumstances.

I’ve talked about George Muller before, so as a reminder. Muller cared for thousands of orphans in England and made a radical commitment: he would never ask for donations — only pray. There were documented mornings when there was no food for the children. On one such day, he thanked God for breakfast with empty plates in front of them. Moments later, a baker knocked on the door—he had felt led to bake bread in the middle of the night. Shortly

after, a milk cart broke down outside the orphanage, and the milk would spoil unless used immediately.

Outnumbered by financial impossibility, Müller saw God provide again and again. Sometimes the battle is financial or logistical—and God answers quietly but precisely.

There is a woman by the name of Joni Eareckson Tada, who after a diving accident left her quadriplegic at 17, faced overwhelming despair. Her battle was not against armies—but against depression, pain, and lifelong disability. Over decades, she has built an international disability ministry, written extensively, and testified to sustaining grace. She often says the real miracle wasn't healing—but learning to trust God in weakness. Sometimes God fights by redefining what victory looks like.

Each of these people faced their own version of a Goliath—war, fear, scarcity, disability, you name it. But their stories remind us of something the Bible tells us again and again: the battle belongs to the Lord.

Today's Scripture is a very well known Scripture. There have been many movies made about this specific story, but also it's become known as it's own type of movie, the underdog story, the classic "David vs. Goliath" dynamic in sports or similar. Such as the movie, *Miracle* in 2004, about the US Olympic hockey team, who were a bunch of college kids, taking on the powerhouse Soviet team in 1980, based on a true story it was a literal "giant-slayer" moment in

sports history. Or one of my favourite sports movies growing up was Remember the Titans, where a newly integrated high school team overcomes prejudice and powerhouse opponents, looking at more social “Goliaths” than physical ones. When you say the words, David and Goliath, I would argue, that there would be very few people in this world, that do not know at least something this story. But the biblical narrative is not primarily a story about human courage and effort; instead, it is about the awesome power of a life built around bold faith in the Lord.

We hear about stones in this story. As we read, David took his staff in his hand, and chose five smooth stones from the wadi, putting them in his shepherd’s bag. It is with a stone and his sling that we know, he slung it and struck Goliath in the forehead, falling to the ground, and killing him. Against a giant of a man, who had a sword, spear, javelin, and armour, David, with no sword, kills Goliath.

Now you’ve probably all played the game, rock, paper, scissors, or if not, you’ve at least heard of it. Rock beats scissors, scissors beats paper, and paper beats rock. Well, ancient warfare, can be described as a rock, paper, scissors game, and David had a plan that fit in with all of this.

During ancient times, in war, there were usually three divisions of arms: cavalry, infantry, and artillery. Ancient armies typically had three divisions: **cavalry, infantry, and artillery**. Infantry with armor and swords could defeat

cavalry with pikes.

Cavalry could overwhelm artillery with speed. But artillery —archers and slingers—were devastating against infantry. Goliath was infantry. David was artillery. We understand a bit more David’s plan coming to light. That is when we hear at the beginning of what was read today in 1 Samuel 17:40 “Then he took his staff in his hand, and chose five smooth stones from the wadi, and put them in his shepherd’s bag, in the pouch; his sling was in his hand, and he drew near to the Philistine.” David, knew what he was doing with stones, and a sling, as part of artillery, but why the staff? You’d think that would only get in the way. He didn’t have plans to use the staff as a weapon, but instead as a distraction, so that Goliath wouldn’t notice the sling in his other hand (and the stones in his bag), for Goliath only mentions the staff as we hear in 1 Samuel 17:43 “The Philistine said to David, “Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?” And the Philistine cursed David by his gods.” When he throws down his staff, the onlookers may no longer have viewed David as an underdog. After all, slingers beat infantry like rock beats scissors.

David didn’t just know what he was doing, he also had faith in his God, Yahweh. When David tells Saul that he will go and fight Goliath, Saul says he cannot go, he’s just a boy and Goliath has been a warrior since he was a child. 1 Samuel 17:34–37 “But David said to Saul, “Your servant

used to keep sheep for his father; and whenever a lion or a bear came, and took a lamb from the flock, I went after it and struck it down, rescuing the lamb from its mouth; and if it turned against me, I would catch it by the jaw, strike it down, and kill it. Your servant has killed both lions and bears; and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, since he has defied the armies of the living God.” David said, “The Lord, who saved me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, will save me from the hand of this Philistine.” So Saul said to David, “Go, and may the Lord be with you!””

David had faith, “The Lord, who saved me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, will save me from the hand of this Philistine.” David didn’t defeat Goliath because of a sling and a stone. David defeated Goliath because the battle belonged to the Lord.

David’s confidence came from both his own experience and his faith in God. Having already fought lions and bears, David knew skill and courage mattered, but he also recognized that survival ultimately depended on God’s help. For David, human effort and divine power worked together. His past experiences gave him confidence, but his final trust rested in God—the Lord of hosts—who has the power to overturn impossible odds and bring victory through unlikely people. What God delights to do is turn odds upside down.”

David fought in the name of the Lord, as he said to Goliath in 1 Samuel 17:46 “This very 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 Philistine army this very day to the birds of the air and to the wild animals of the earth, so that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.” He fought in the name of the Lord and for the glory of the Lord. And we hear in 1 Samuel 17:48 “When the Philistine drew nearer to meet David, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine.” David rushed into battle, emboldened by his faith. 1 Samuel 17:50 states “So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, striking down the Philistine and killing him; there was no sword in David’s hand.” When I read this the other week, I thought, there’s something missing in this statement that we cannot forget from the story. He didn’t prevail just with a sling and a stone, with no sword in his hand, but with faith in a God who he knew was on his side. If God wasn’t for this, this wouldn’t have happened. David’s heart was in the right place. He wasn’t doing it for his own glory, to showcase his own talents, or for his own recognition, but as we heard, “so that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.” David didn’t just have a stone and a sling, he had God. He knew that and he shared that, he declared that to others. What language do we use with ourselves and others? Do we tell ourselves and others that there is a God? Instead of responding to Goliath’s cursing

with curses he outlines the character of his God, that the battle is God's. He has confidence in his God, do you? David wasn't just declaring this to the Philistines, he was declaring as it says in 1 Samuel 17:47 "and that ALL THIS assembly may know that the Lord does not save by sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's and he will give you into our hand." Israel had rejected Yahweh's kingship, wanting a king like the other nations as we hear in 1 Samuel 8:5. Here David is also calling Israel back to its faith in God. The battle is God's...not the army's and not the king's.

God gave the kingdom from Saul to David because as it says in 1 Samuel 13:14 "the Lord has sought out a man after his own heart," which was David's, as we saw in this story. David wrote in Psalm 9:1 "I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart; I will tell of all your wonderful deeds." or Psalm 19:14 "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer." He prayed in Psalm 26:2 "Prove me, O Lord, and try me; test my heart and mind." When God told David to seek His face, David replied Psalm 27:8 "Your face, Lord, do I seek." David often failed, yet his life was marked by a returning heart — again and again turning back to God. He wasn't perfect, but he was repentant. His deepest desire was to follow God. His devotion was real, but not without failure.

David wrote Psalm 27 sometime after his defeat of Goliath. It was written during hard times in his life; believed either when he was fleeing from the murderous jealousy of Saul, even though he had been nothing but a faithful servant to him, or when David was fleeing from his son, Absalom, who had conspired to take his throne; a horrible situation of family betrayal. As it begins, The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When evildoers assail me to devour my flesh— my adversaries and foes— they shall stumble and fall...”

In this hard moment of life, David doesn't begin by complaining; he begins by reminding himself of what is true. When life doesn't make sense, he reminds himself about the theology of the Word of God. He reminds himself of what the Lord was, is, and will be. How the Lord has been there, reminding himself of his fight against Goliath when he says, “When evildoers assail me to devour my flesh — my adversaries and foes — they shall stumble and fall.” As one individual writes, “David understands there's One who sits on a throne of the universe who is way more beautiful than any ugly thing you will face in your life. And you will only properly understand the ugly things in your life when you look at them through the awesome glory of the beauty of your Redeemer.”

David defeating Goliath is not just a story about courage. It

points us forward. Just as David stood as Israel's representative against an enemy they could not defeat, Jesus stood in our place against sin, death, and evil. Where we were powerless, Christ fought the battle we could not win. As it says in Colossians 2:15 "He disarmed the rulers and authorities and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in it." There is power and inspiration in a faith-filled life. Yahweh gives the victory. Take it as an encouragement that God works through flawed people, because we all are flawed. We are all complex characters, as we know David was a flawed man. Our best moments in service of God are doubtless tainted with selfish motives. None of us has "arrived" (Phil 3:12), and none of us are completely sinless. Yet thanks to Jesus' death and resurrection, our sin is not counted against us, and God works through us to continue to establish his kingdom.

As I end today, the question is not whether Goliaths exist. They do. Every generation faces them. Sometimes they look like fear. Sometimes like grief. Sometimes like financial pressure, broken relationships, illness, or spiritual exhaustion.

But the real question is this: Who do you believe is fighting the battle? When David walked into that valley in 1 Samuel 17, he didn't walk in thinking the victory depended on him. He didn't trust in a sword, or armor, or the strength of an army behind him. He walked in knowing something the

others had forgotten. “The battle is the Lord’s.” David had stones. David had a sling. But more importantly, David had a God. And the same God who stood with David still stands with His people today.

The truth of Scripture is not that God removes every giant instantly. Sometimes He does. Sometimes the stone flies and the giant falls. But sometimes God fights the battle differently. Sometimes He gives endurance like He did for Joni Eareckson Tada. Sometimes He provides like He did for George Müller. Sometimes He gives courage like Desmond Doss. But in every case, the victory still belongs to Him. And ultimately, the greatest battle was not fought in the Valley of Elah. It was fought at the cross.

Where we were powerless against sin and death, Jesus Christ stepped forward as our champion. Through His death and resurrection, the giant we could never defeat was already conquered. So whatever Goliath you are facing today, remember who your God is.

The Lord is your light. The Lord is your salvation. The Lord is the stronghold of your life. And the same truth David declared still stands today: The battle is the Lord’s.

