

**“The Size of the Fight”**  
1 Samuel 17:32-49; Mark 4:35-41

Those of you who have the blessing of knowing my brother Mark Judson (or is it a curse? ☺) know that it doesn't take long in any conversation with him for a sports analogy to raise its 'athletic' head. (Usually, 'Medusa!') In a recent one that the two of us had we were talking about our respective HS sports experiences. And I was reminded of a saying that was etched both over the door of our locker room at BRHS, and forever on my memory... one that I'm sure many of you have heard before: *“It's not the size of the dog in the fight... but the size of the fight in the dog.”* Which was most appropriate since we were the... *Bulldogs!* And as I stood next to Mark... a man I definitely 'look up' to... that correlation between physical size and mental strength, and how they relate to being victorious over a larger 'foe,' certainly came to mind.

And speaking of 'size,' it doesn't take a mental 'giant' to see how this old sports saying would relate to the 'star player' in our O.T. story today. David's contest with Goliath would be the *epitomy* of that expression's truth. BUT, there are TWO verses here. What correlation would there be between David's struggle with that 'fearsome Philistine' and Jesus' calming of both a storm and His disciples? Well, I would suggest to you that both David, and those disciples of Jesus, had a common adversary. Not of a *physical* nature... but one that attacked both the *mental* and *spiritual* natures. That no matter its form... in our Bible examples, from a giant warrior to massive winds and waves... we all must grapple with 'the size of the fight' each one of us wages... the 'fight' with our FEARS...

Those 'fears' that you and I struggle with come in many shapes and sizes. In our story from *1 Samuel*, there was fear of an overwhelming human opponent who could inflict great pain, and even death. For the disciples, they too feared dying, not at the hands of man, but by the waters of a storm. We too can fear physical harm, or death itself. But the 'fears' that we face on a daily basis take many more insidious, subversive forms. Fear of the deterioration of our physical health, which can manifest itself in both acute, or chronic, long-term ways. Fears of Financial insecurity, which can sometimes be related to those health issues. Emotional

anxieties, which affect our relationships with others. Fears of being too close to others (either physically or emotionally... OR, conversely, the fear of being isolated and alone. From 'elephants in the room' to annoying little bugs, there are any number of fears and phobias that can plague us. The 'size of the fight' we wage inside is as 'individual' as each one of us...

In these two passages, God's followers demonstrated how they handled the fear that was within them. In the Old Testament story, **David conquered his fear. He won his battle.** What can we learn from the ways in which he vanquished that 'giant' of an obstacle?

First of all, David demonstrated **confidence** in God. Even when the person that should have been the most supportive of him was not. When David stood up to face this Philistine when everyone else cowered in fear, King Saul poo-pooed his valor: ***"You are just a boy; he has been a warrior since he was your age."*** (1 Samuel 17:33) 'He is a battle-tested veteran; you are just a ROOKIE.'

But David would remain undaunted by his 'head coach's' lack of support. He replied to Saul that ***"The Lord who saved me from the paws of lion and bear will save me from the hand of this Philistine."*** (1 Samuel 17:37) David stood fast in the **confidence** that the same faithful God who had delivered him from harm in the past would continue to do so in the present, and future. Long before the Apostle Paul was even a glint in his mother's eye, David bore witness to his belief that ***"he who began a work in me WILL be faithful to complete it."*** Being a faithful young follower of the One True God of Israel, perhaps David heard in his mind words written by the great Israelite leader Joshua: ***"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid. Do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go."*** (Joshua 1:9)

It is just these words that WE need to hear when we face great challenges... ones that even people we respect don't think we can handle. Challenges like, say a SMALL church taking on a BIG building project. ;) We too should heed the words of God through Joshua: 'Don't be afraid. Don't be discouraged. Be strong, because the Lord your God WILL be with you WHEREVER you go'...

When Saul finally bought in to David's 'sales pitch,' he then wanted to equip him for the battle. The 'rookie' being 'dressed out' for his first 'start' with the 'varsity.' To give him the

'usual & customary' **TOOLS** needed for warfare: a coat of armor, a bronze helmet, a battle sword. But David found them to be too cumbersome. ***"I cannot walk with these, for I am not used to these."*** (1 Sam 17:38-39) SO instead, he went down to the '**wadi**' (Jewish for a normally DRY 'bayou' or 'coulee') to pick out some stones for his slingshot. (He probably also 'went down to the river to **pray**' as well...) David knew that his **hope** in this battle would lie NOT in the **conventional wisdom of man**, but in the **unconventional power of God**. That, in Isaiah's words, ***"no weapon formed against thee will stand."*** (Isaiah 54:17)

As many of you know... some because you are participating... for the past few weeks we have been hosting a Grief Support Group facilitated by our friends at Harbor Hospice. (And I want you all... especially those participants... to know just how (shall I say it?) **PROUD** I am for your involvement! It takes a big person to help another... it can take an even bigger one to let someone help THEM). Anyway, after this past week's meeting, one of the 'non-FPC' group members mentioned how she had gone to a 'secular' counselor before this one, and received very little of value; but this had been **MOST** beneficial. Why? Because of its **faith**-basis. Like David, she couldn't walk with those cumbersome tools of the culture/times. Like David, she knew that her **hope** lay NOT in the **conventional wisdom of man**, but in the **UN-conventional power of God**. How important it was to have the right 'TOOLS' for the battles we face. Those weapons of God's **Word... His Presence in Prayer... His People**.

The final reason that I believe David was able to conquer the giant (both physical and psychological) is because they both **belittled** his **faith** in **GOD**. As Goliath chortled at this 'little pretty boy,' it became personal in more ways than one. The simple shepherd boy stood up to the great warrior and said ***"I come to you in the name of the Lord... the God whom you have defiled.*** ('polluted,' 'dirtied') ***This very day the Lord will deliver you into my hands... for the battle is the Lord's."*** (1 Samuel 17:45-47) And having said this, David doesn't wait to see what his adversary will do. He charges out to the battle line to meet the Philistine and... well... you know the rest. 😊

Goliath was NOT just dismissing David. He was putting down David's true 'commander in chief.' It's like we always say about where to draw the line in speaking ill of another: 'Say what you will about ME, but my FAMILY...?! Now THAT'S another matter!' David knew that he

was standing up for much more than himself, or Saul, or his fellow Israelites. He was taking a stand for his Heavenly Father... his 'holy The same Father that David was likely praying to before going out to the battlefield from tending his sheep. (Hmmm... a shepherd who cares for his sheep, but also fights the battle to protect them. Sound familiar...?) It was during some of those 'slow times' of sheep-tending during which David might have written some of his earlier Psalms. One like: ***"The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"*** (Ps 27:1)

The Lord WAS David's stronghold... so he had no reason to be afraid. The battle wasn't his to fight... it was the Lord. That trash-talking freak of a man-beast might have been bigger than him... but NOT bigger than his Lord. In standing tall in the shadow of Goliath, David bore witness to a modern-day saying you might be familiar with: **"Let your faith be bigger than your fear."**

When we stand before modern-day 'giants' of anxiety and fear, we should take it personal. The battles we fight must not be ours alone... but rather, the Lord's. We are to claim the same truth that David did: ***"The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"*** In the face of a world that can laugh at those who take a stand for God, we should pray for that gentle whisper of our Lord who says to us, **"Let your faith be bigger than your fear."**

By now you might be thinking, 'OK, pastor, you've spent a LOT of time on David. What about that MOST important 'descendant' of David's... JESUS? Have you *forgotten* about HIM, and those fear-full disciples?

Nooo, not at all. David **conquered** his fears. What about those disciples? They **gave in** to them. Which one of these might we best relate to? Yep... As much as we know God to be a 'stronghold' on our 'highway to heaven,' sometimes we might think we don't need to stop there. 'The battle belongs to the Lord'... but we keep 'borrowing' it back. Tempted to think that our fears are small enough for us to handle on our own, we can too often experience a phenomenon of 'physical science' in our spiritual lives. I call it the 'gaseous principle' of emotions like *fear*: it will expand to occupy every inch of space in the vessel it is given.

The 'vessel' fear was given in our Gospel reading was a small boat filled with 'frightful disciples.' ☺ Ones who couldn't handle it on their own... and when they cried out 'Jesus, take

the wheel' they found him 'ASLEEP at the wheel!' Not-so-faithful followers who even had the nerve to tell the Son of God ***"Don't you CARE that we are perishing?"*** (Mark 4:38)

Of COURSE he cared. Knowing just how hard it would be to *sleep* in the middle of a ***"great windstorm"*** in which ***"the waves beat into the boat,"*** I found myself wondering if the ***"Teacher"*** really was just 'playing possum,' to see how his 'students' would handle a 'pop quiz' on **faithfulness**. Which they failed. But he didn't leave the classroom. He proved his concern for them by quieting the storm... and their hearts and minds. ***"Peace! Be still!"*** That when they felt their most powerless, their weakest, Jesus was there to declare, ***"Peace. Be still."*** Perhaps it was this very experience that would lead John to later write, ***"Perfect love casts out fear."*** (1 John 4:18)

And so, whether or not we are like David, who was given the strength to overcome his fear, or like the Disciples, who had to cry out to the Lord in their weakness, may we know that indeed, ***"Perfect love casts out fear."*** Even when our love for God is FAR FROM 'perfect,' we can know that the perfect love of the only perfect One, Jesus, is there to cast out our fear. In the words of another disciple, Peter, we are to ***"Cast all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you."*** (1 Peter 5:7) No matter HOW well you may be able to do this, I leave you with these words from one of our more 'contemporary' hymns based on this verse:

*"I cast all my cares upon you, Lord. I lay all of my burdens down at your feet.*

*And anytime I don't know what to do... I will cast all my cares upon you."*

And may all of God's 'fearfully, wonderfully made' children say... AMEN!

"I have never known more than fifteen minutes of anxiety or fear. Whenever I feel fearful emotions overtaking me, I just close my eyes and thank God that He is still on the throne reigning over everything, and I take comfort in His control over all the affairs of my life."

– John Wesley

Some of the most powerful words in Scripture were spoken by Jesus with regards to how our faith can be greater than our fear: ***"Peace I leave with you; my peace I leave with you. So let NOT your hearts be troubled, and do NOT be afraid."*** (John 14:27) May we always remember:

***"IT'S NOT THE SIZE OF YOUR FAITH IN GOD, BUT THE SIZE OF GOD IN YOUR FAITH!"***