

God's Solution to our Goliath Problem

Beloved congregation, all of us have problems in life. Some problems are easy to solve, some are harder to solve, and some are, or seem, impossible to solve. I'm sure if we would share with each other all the problems in our life we could come up with quite a list. But what is our greatest problem? The greatest problem is not sickness, it's not pain, it's not the government, no; the greatest problem both personally and as a church, is *everything that opposes God*. And that includes our sinful flesh, the ungodly world, and ultimately, Satan himself. That is our greatest problem. That's our Goliath problem.

And it is not a problem we can solve. But we like to think we can! And so we can read a story like this, that we just read, the story of David and Goliath, and we can completely miss the point. We can read a story like this and think, 'I'm going to be like David. I'm going to go slay my Goliath's.' Instead of seeing it as a Gospel story that God meant it to be, we take it as a story that is supposed to inspire us and help us. Don't get me wrong, there are lessons to learn from David here. I'm sure we've all heard sermons on David's faith, and there is a good and proper place for that of course. But if *all* we learn from this passage is that we should be like David and go slay our Goliath's, we are missing the point.

You see, we cannot slay Goliath. We cannot slay that giant of a problem that we have, our sinful flesh, the ungodly world, and the Devil. It's too strong, it's too big. And we need to understand that. Did you ever wonder why the Bible uses 4 entire verses in this chapter to describe Goliath? Let me just put the description of him in today's terms. His enormous 2.9 metres height. He wore impenetrable bronze armour weighing about 57kg, besides his helmet and his leg armour. His bronze javelin, his thick spear shaft, was thick as a weaver's beam, with an iron spearhead weighing about 7kg. And his own shield bearer going before him.

Why does the Bible show us all this? It describes for us the real Goliath, to show us how big, how strong, how impressive and how terrifying he really was, as a picture of what the Goliath, that all of us face, is. We can't fight him. We can't defeat him. Pastors cannot, elders and deacons cannot, parents cannot, and dear children, neither can you. But God can. And God will.

That's the point of verse 47, when David speaks to Goliath and he tells him that the Lord is going to deliver Goliath into his hand. He says in verse 47, "and all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the LORD's and He will give you into our hands." The lesson that God was teaching Israel through this, and the lesson that He is teaching us, is not that *we* must solve our Goliath problem. The real lesson is this: God solves our Goliath problem, and He does it through His Anointed King.

Because you see, you need to read chapter 17 in light of chapter 16, and do you know what happened in chapter 16? What happened is that Samuel, commanded by God, went to Jesse and his sons, and who did he anoint to be the next king of Israel? He anointed David, in obedience to God. And so David, here in chapter 17, is not David the man, he is David, God's anointed king! And as God's anointed king, he kills Goliath. And David, was a picture, a type, of Christ. And so he points forward to Jesus Christ, who is God's ultimate Anointed King, through whom God solves our Goliath problem.

1 Samuel 17 is a Gospel story. And so with God's help we want to look at this chapter, under the theme 'God's solution to our Goliath problem.'

First, we will see His solution through the coming of His Anointed King.
Second, the commitment of His Anointed King.

And third the triumph of His anointed King.

1) So first, we see the coming of God's Anointed King. Children, you can imagine the scene described for us in the first few verses of the chapter. The Philistines lived on a little part between the Mediterranean Sea and Israel, and they were trying to invade Judah. They were trying to get more land, and so they were pushing further in. Saul and the men come to meet them, and the two armies face off in the valley of Elah. This valley is only 800 metres wide, and there is a little creek running through it and on both sides are mountains. So on one side is Saul and the men of Israel, and on the other side there are the Philistines. What's going to happen?

Well, let's look from the Israelite's side. Someone from the Philistines camp is coming out, and he is a giant! His name is Goliath, and he is big, and strong, and well armed. And suddenly, as he comes out, he stops and shouts across the valley, "Why are ye come out to set your battle in array? Am I not a Philistine, and ye servants to Saul? Choose you a man for you, and let him come down to me. If ye be able to fight with me, and to kill me, then will we be your servants: but if I prevail against him, and kill him, then shall ye be our servants, and serve us." And then he says this: "I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together."

What was he doing, children? He was mocking Israel wasn't he? He was coming out and saying "Hah, Israel, you can't stop us!" It was a desperate situation! Verse 11 says that when Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed. Literally the word means their hearts were shattered, they were greatly afraid. Not even Saul's promises of wealth, his daughter as a bride, or the exemption of taxes, were enough to make someone stand up to Goliath. It seemed hopeless with Israel.

But it wasn't hopeless with Israel's God! In verses 12-30 David, God's anointed king, comes on the scene. Verse 12 begins with "Now David." At the time David was just doing his work, taking care of his dad's sheep. He had been *anointed* as king, but he wasn't yet *enthroned* as king, so he was still working as a shepherd of sheep. His three oldest brothers were in the army, but David, the youngest in the family, wasn't. One day his dad tells him to go to the army camp and take some food for his brothers. David obeys, and in the middle of verse 20, we read that David came to the camp. God's anointed king comes as God's solution to His people's Goliath problem.

He comes in Sovereign Grace. If you read earlier in 1 Samuel, you'll understand this, because why was there a king in Israel in the first place? Why was Saul the king of Israel? It was because Israel wanted a king for themselves as a sign of their rejection of God. Samuel explicitly says to Israel, that in wanting a king, they were rejecting God. They wanted a king that would rule them like all the other nations, and the king that God had in forbearance given them, Saul, he himself had rejected God on numerous occasions. He had disobeyed God, and rebelled against Him. You have to understand, that God would have been perfectly Just to let the Philistines have at the Israelites. He would have been perfectly Just.

And at first it seemed that was what He was going to do. Notice in verse 16, Goliath didn't just defy Israel once, but twice a day, for forty days! I don't about you, but if you were in the camp of Israel, and you had to hear that defiance twice a day for forty days, I think by the end of forty days, you'd be pretty demoralised. It's a long time! But you know what the sad thing is, congregation? The sad thing is, that not once do we hear Saul or the men of Israel cry out to God, humbling themselves before Him, seeking His face. We don't hear them praying or singing words like the ones we just sang from psalter 216:3 "Help us God of our salvation, for the glory of thy Name, for thy Name's sake come and save us, take away our sin and shame." We don't hear it.

And yet, at the end of those forty days, David comes to the camp. What is that congregation? That's grace! Even the number 40 indicates that. 40 days, or 40 years, are often times of God's judgement in discipline in the Bible, but these times almost always end by God's sovereign and gracious intervention. You can think of the flood, how many days and nights did it rain? 40 days and 40 nights. But God, in His grace, stopped the rain. Or you could think of the Israelites serving the Philistines another time, in the book of Judges, for 40 years. And how does it end? It ends with God graciously raising up Samson to deliver them.

That's what happening here. David's coming to the camp at the end of 40 days, and right at the time of day when Goliath comes out, is God's grace to His sinful people. God's anointed king comes in God's sovereign grace. That was true of David, and that is just as true of Christ. You see, why did Christ come to this world? Was it because we were seeking God? No, Christ came because God was seeking us! He came because He was seeking and saving sinners from their willing enslavement to sin and Satan. He came to save people who by nature are proud and prayerless. Christ Jesus, God's Anointed King, came to this earth, and He comes also in His Word to us this morning. He comes to you, in His sovereign grace. Oh, let us treasure that! And let us respond to His grace by trusting Him!

But He comes not only with sovereign grace, He comes with God's Almighty Power. You see, David came equipped. I'm not just speaking about the food that he came with, I'm speaking about the Spirit of God that he came with. 1 Samuel 16:13 tells us that after David was anointed, the Spirit of the Lord came upon him from that day forward. Verse 14 says that the same Spirit departed from Saul. You see, that's why Saul, even though he was there, and he was king, couldn't face Goliath, because he didn't have the empowering Spirit of God. And without the empowering Spirit of God, he had nothing.

But David did have the Spirit. He had the empowerment given by God. David's life and identity as God's anointed king was attached to God. And that's what moved David to respond to Goliath's defiance with the proper perspective. He said in verse 26 "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" The Spirit of God that was upon David made him stand when the rest of the army was fleeing. It was the Spirit of God that was upon David that made him stay when his older brother Eliab slandered his motives. Nothing dissuaded or discouraged David. Nothing made him turn around and go home. No, because he was equipped with the Spirit of God. He had come with God's almighty power.

And so has Christ. Remember what happened at His baptism? There was a voice "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" and the Spirit of God descended upon Jesus as a dove to empower Him for His saving work. Oh what an encouragement this is, congregation, is it not? When we feel so weak, when we see our sins and our depravity and the evil of our hearts, how mighty it seems, how powerless we are to save ourselves, we have hope because we have a Saviour who has come with Almighty Power. You may be the worst sinner, you may be the weakest saint, and you can know that He is able to save you, to sanctify you, to renew you, to revive you, to preserve you. He is able to revive His Church and preserve her in the midst of persecution. Yes, He is able to deliver you, and He *will* deliver all who look to Christ, one day, once and for all.

Don't you just love those first two words of verse 12, "Now David". 'Now God's anointed king has come.' But maybe you're thinking, 'Is it really that easy? Yes, Christ came as our solution to our Goliath problem, but is He willing to be God's solution?'

2) Well this brings us to our second point, the commitment of God's anointed king. And here we want to look especially at verses 31-47. Children, this is where the story really begins to get

exciting, because verse 31 tells us that some soldiers heard this boy David repeating the questions he asked in verse 26 ‘what shall be done for the man that kills Goliath?’ They report his words to Saul, and Saul summons David to him, and in verse 32 David sums up his commitment. David said to Saul, “Let no man’s heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine.” There it is. Saul, I, your servant, will go and fight with this Philistine.’ God’s Anointed King is committed to be God’s solution to our Goliath problem.

And what a commitment it is. The soldiers were so terrified, they were so frightened, but David loads his commitment with reassurance. “Let no man’s heart fail because of him.” David is saying as it were to the people, “Don’t be afraid any more, I’ve got this. You don’t need to be dismayed any longer, you don’t need to run away any more, because I’ve come and I’m committed to fight this Goliath for you, in your place.

David’s commitment is so reassuring, and it is so unshakable. Saul says to him, “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.” Children, what does David say in response? Does he say, “Oh... yeah... Saul, I didn’t think about that... I am a little bit young... I am pretty inexperienced... maybe I should just think about it some more.’ Is that what David says? No, right? David doesn’t waver, David doesn’t hesitate. His commitment is unshakable, and he tells Saul how as a shepherd he has killed both lions and bears when they tried to steal a lamb, and then he says this in verse 36, “Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be (*shall be!*) as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God.” And then he continues in verse 37, “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 the hand of this Philistine.”

Well, Saul hears him, and finally realises that David isn’t changing his mind, and so he says “Go, and the LORD be with thee.” And even when Saul’s armour doesn’t work for David, David’s commitment remains firm, doesn’t it. Even though that means he is going to be going against Goliath exposed, vulnerable, defenceless, his commitment is unshakeable.

But his commitment is also God-honouring. Children, what do you think was filling David’s heart? What do you think was burning in David’s heart, as he went down to that brook and picked up five smooth stones, and put them in his pocket? What was in David’s heart? Was it a sense of his own greatness? No, it was a sense of God’s greatness! David was going to face Goliath because he was consumed with a zeal for God’s honour. You hear that in what he says, don’t you? He says “How can this uncircumcised Philistine defy the armies of the *living God*?”

You see, David knew that God had entered into a covenant relationship with Israel, and so Goliath’s defiant shaming of Israel, his scorning of Israel, was a defiant, shaming and scorning of Israel’s God. And David couldn’t stand that! What’s more, David knew that God wouldn’t stand that. So that’s why when Goliath scorns him and curses him by his gods and threatens to give his flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field, David answers so powerfully in verses 45-47 “Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel whom thou hast defied. This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know (not how great I am, no) that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the LORD’s, and He will give you into our hands.”

Congregation, that has to be one of the most glorious speeches in the Bible, and it’s also one of the most God-honouring. David doesn’t say, ‘I’m going to defeat Goliath by my own great skill, or

even by my great faith.' No, he says 'I'm going to defeat Goliath by my great God!' David's commitment is reassuring, it's unshakable, and it's God-honouring.

And so, what is the point? Is it 'Let's go be like David'? Is the point even to make us pray 'Lord, make me like David?' Or 'Send me a David'? No, congregation. You see, we already have a David. We have the Son of David, the greater David! We have the Lord Jesus Christ, and He is God's Anointed King, and He has been committed from all eternity to save His people from sin, from the world and from Satan.

And this commitment, congregation of Christ, is far more reassuring, and far more unshakeable, and far more God-honouring even than David's was. Because you see, this King Jesus is God Himself, the Son of God who has come as the long-promised Redeemer. The point of this passage is not 'Be like David'. The point of the passage is this: 'Trust and follow the David you already have. Trust and follow Jesus Christ'.

I'm not saying we can't learn from David's example. Of course we can learn from him, and we should grow in our faith in God by remembering, like David did, what He has done in the past. We should be committed like David was, to fighting against sin. We should, like David, be consumed with God's honour. Everything we did this past week should have been done out of a zeal for the honour of God. And if that's not true, then we are guilty of sin.

But that's exactly the problem. All of us fall short, all of us fail. But oh, then how reassuring Jesus' commitment is for you and me. Remember his words in John 14:1, almost exactly the same reassurance that David gave to Israel. Jesus spoke these words to disciples who were sad and confused and frightened, and they were men whom He knew would scatter and leave Him alone to face the enemy by Himself. And He says to them, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions... I go to prepare a place for you." Isn't that reassuring?

And His commitment is unshakeable too, isn't it? Jesus never wavered. You see that in His response to Satan's temptations in the wilderness. You see it when He sets his face like a flint to go to Jerusalem, even though He knew it would cost Him immense suffering and death. You hear that unwavering commitment when He rebukes Simon Peter for trying to prevent Him from that suffering. You hear that unwavering commitment when He declares to His disciples "I will build my church." You see His unshakeable commitment as He is there in Pilate's hall and the scourges are ripping open His back. You see His unshakeable commitment in those three hours of darkness as He was forsaken by His Father. He never hesitated. Christ's commitment to be God's solution to our Goliath problem was, and remains, unshakeable.

And God-honouring. You see, Jesus' commitment to save His people is a commitment to His Father's will. It is a commitment to fulfil God's promise given already in the Garden of Eden, in Genesis 3:15: a promise that God would put enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, and that the seed of the woman would crush Satan's head. It was a zeal for God's honour that Christ lived with all His days. When He went to the temple and cleansed it, He did it out of zeal for God's honour. It was His zeal for God's honour that led Him all the way to the cross, even though it was hard, because you remember He prayed in the garden, "Father, not my will, but Thine." Christ's commitment is God-honouring, unshakeable, and so reassuring.

And that is what enables us as we face Goliath. In a certain sense, he is a mortally wounded Goliath. That's what enables us to sing with Martin Luther,
"Did we in our own strength confide
Our striving would be losing

Were not the right man on our side
The man of God's own choosing
Dost ask who that may be?
Christ Jesus, it is He
Lord Sabaoth, His Name
From age to age, the same
And He must win the battle."

Won't you trust and follow Christ, your King, as God's solution to your Goliath problem? Or will you still hold back? Surely not!

3) Seeing not only the coming and commitment of God's Anointed King, but thirdly and lastly, also His triumph. Children, this is the moment that you looked forward to. This is the moment that you've been waiting for, isn't it? Who is going to win, Goliath or David? Look, there in the valley is Goliath, big, strong, experienced, fully armed, and there's David, small, weak, defenceless, inexperienced, unarmed except for his sling, and they are coming together, approaching each other. David is even running toward Goliath, and he is pulling a stone out of his bag, and putting it in his sling, and he whips that sling around... and look now! The stone is hurtling out of the sling right toward Goliath. Bang! Right into his forehead! Somebody told me that slingers can sling stones at 240km an hour. It hits him right in the forehead, it sinks down into it. Now Goliath is falling face first, and there he is, on the ground. David runs up to him and he finishes him off, doesn't he? He pulls out Goliath's sword and cuts off his head.

You see congregation, God's anointed king hasn't just come, and he isn't just committed. No, he really is God's solution to Israel's Goliath problem. He has triumphed over the enemy, and it is a decisive triumph. That is the message in all of the details of these verses. The stone striking and sinking into Goliath's forehead, his falling to the earth, and his being killed by David's cutting off his head with Goliath's own sword. It all declares to us the decisiveness of David's triumph. Goliath, with all his loud and defiant boasting, is dead. And it's game over for the Philistines. Verse 51 says that when the Philistines saw Goliath dead, they fled. David's triumph is decisive.

And Christ's triumph over sin, the world, and Satan by His death and resurrection, is even more decisive. Christ Himself declared that His death on the cross meant the casting out of the ruler of this world. Colossians 2:14 says that Christ by His death on the cross not only took away the handwriting of the requirements that were against us, He not only took away the curse that we deserve because of our sin, but He also spoiled principalities and powers. He made an open show, a public spectacle of all that opposed him, triumphing over them in it by his resurrection. You see congregation, Christ as God's own Anointed King, by His death and resurrection, has crushed Satan's head.

Is that a comfort to you? Dear child of God, sometimes it seems to you like evil and opposition to God and His people are winning, doesn't it? And yes, it's true, Satan is still active, yes we still have remaining sin, and yes, the world will persecute us. But Christ has delivered the mortal blow to all of it. Satan's doom is sure. Sin's days are numbered. Full liberation, full freedom and peace is sure, because the triumph of God's Anointed King is so decisive. What a comfort it is.

What a warning also, because how important it is to be on His side. Can you say that about yourself? Or are you on Goliath's side? Maybe you say, how do I know whose side I am on? You know, congregation, by what you are doing with God's Anointed King. You see, those who are on His side trust Him and follow Him. They trust in Him for their salvation, and they not only trust in

Him, they also follow Him, for His triumph is not only so decisive, it's also so mobilising. You see that also in our passage.

Notice what happens after David cuts off Goliath's head. The Philistines flee, and the men of Israel and Judah rise up and shout, and pursue the Philistines, killing them all along the road. David's triumph is mobilising. It changes everything. Did you notice the contrast to earlier in the chapter? Before, as soon as they saw Goliath, they turned tail and ran the other way. But now that David has killed Goliath, they rise up and shout, and they don't flee, they pursue.

Congregation, that is what Christ's triumph does for His people. It mobilises them, it moves them to action. No, we are not called to defeat our Goliath, that's Christ's work, He did that for us. But that doesn't leave us passive. No, it calls us, and enables us, and mobilises us to fight and put to death the sin that remains in our lives. It mobilises us to resist temptation. That's a lifelong battle, but it's a battle worth fighting, because the victory is guaranteed in Christ, in His glorious Person and Work and in His decisive triumph over sin and Satan and the world.

So again, I ask, whose side are you on? It's the most important question in life. Don't shrug it off. You see, David brought Goliath's head to Jerusalem as a warning. Jerusalem wasn't really in Israelite hands at this point. There were some Israelites living there, but they had mixed with the Jebusites, they had never conquered Jerusalem. So by bringing Goliath's head to Jerusalem, David was warning them that no one can oppose God's anointed king. And that warning is for us today too. No one can oppose Jesus Christ and win.

But you know, there is an encouragement in this gruesome picture of Goliath's severed head. Because it tells you, beloved, that there is nothing in your heart and life that God's Anointed King cannot handle. So you can bring it all to Him. You can bring your prayerlessness, you can bring your pride, you can bring your worldliness, you can bring your present sins, you can bring your past sins, you can bring your repeated and persistent sins, you can bring your hard heart to Him, you can bring that temptation you are facing to Him, you can bring that spiritual assault by Satan to Him. Bring it all to Him! To Him, who by His coming, and by His death and resurrection has destroyed the works of the devil, and triumphed over the enemy. Bring it to Him, who is and will forever be, God's solution to our Goliath problem. He will give the victory, because the battle is His.

Well, do you see congregation, the primary lesson, the Gospel lesson, in the story of David and Goliath? It's not teaching us first of all, to be like David, it's teaching us to trust in, and follow, the Son of David, our Lord Jesus Christ. He is God's Anointed King, whom God has given, and whom the Lord offers to us this morning, and reminds us so that we would trust Him, so that we would follow Him, and so that in His strength and power we would rise up and fight our battles this week, putting sin to death, looking to Him, and doing it with a shout and a song of victory, because God is the giver of victory. Amen.