



Sermon Series: Risk-Takers: The Adventure of Walking by Faith

To be used with Session Four: David: A Faith That Meets Adversity Head-on

Sermon Title Possibilities: The Bigger They Are, The Harder They Fall

Scripture: 1 Samuel 17:3-8, 32-37, 45-47

Connection with Unit Theme: To complement the Bible study “David: A Faith That Meets Adversity Head-on” this sermon emphasizes that faith moves with confidence in God. The Oxford Dictionary defines confidence as “the feeling or belief that one can rely on someone or something; firm trust.” David had every reason to be confident he could defeat Goliath because he had already defeated lions and bears. However, David knew that his victories came because of his trust in God, and his confidence in God assured him that if God did it before, He could do it again. The same God right now is the same God back then. The apostle Paul poses the rhetorical question, “If God is for us, who can be against us” (Rom. 8:31).

Introduction: Winn Collier relates a story about Baby Saybie, a “micro-preemie” born at 23 weeks and weighing only 8.6 ounces. Doctors believed that Saybie would not survive and told her parents they’d only have about an hour with their daughter. Amazingly, Saybie kept fighting. A pink card near her crib declared “Tiny but Mighty.” After five months in the hospital, Saybie miraculously became the world’s tiniest surviving baby, and left the hospital, a healthy five pounds.

The first generation of Israelites forfeited God’s promises by believing a bad report that there were giants in the land they could not overcome (Num. 13:31-33). Often in life, it’s not what we’re facing that defeats us. It’s listening to others (no matter how well-meaning) who tell us we can’t. It’s fear, and our refusal to fight. But Saybie’s story teaches us that what other people say does not determine our destiny, that God has not given us a spirit of fear (2 Tim. 1:7), and that we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us (Php. 4:13). Let’s not forfeit God’s promises by believing a “bad report.” There is no “giant” that is bigger than the God we serve! If angels bow before Him and heaven and earth adore Him, what enemy can stand against Him?

1 Samuel 17:3-8. Standstill in the face of the enemy.

The Israelites were like deer in headlights, frozen by fear (17:11). For forty days, morning and evening, Goliath came out to taunt them, to the point where their standstill turned into a retreat

(17:24). Despite the king's offer of benefits to the man who would fight Goliath and defeat him (17:25), the offer wasn't enough to overcome anyone's fear.

It's one thing to stand up against the enemy (17:3), it's another thing to fight. Many people fool themselves into thinking that showing up is the same as putting into practice what is necessary to defeat the opposition. Plenty of people show up at church, thinking it's enough to defeat the giants in their lives. But we must put God's word into practice if we are going to see the enemy fall. James says, be doers of the word and not merely hearers deceiving yourselves (James 1:22). The Israelite's heard the call to battle (17:2), but were merely deceiving themselves, because they would dress for the fight, but refuse to do anything about their situation. The longer we refuse to fight, the more the enemy takes up every waking moment of our lives (morning and evening), so that our inaction turns into retreat, a resignation that we can't do anything about our situation. We are often defeated by the enemy's roar, not by his bite, and we forfeit the benefits the "king" offers, that if we fight, not only would he enrich us, but he would set us free (17:25).

1 Samuel 17:32-37. Strengthened by experiences.

David had history with God. Fundamentally, David saw the present circumstances no different than the past. Different opponent, same God. If God helped him defeat his opposition before, then He would help him again. In light of the opposition we may currently face, it would help us to look back at the obstacles we've already overcome. The Israelites had defeated a giant and his army before. In Deuteronomy 3, they defeated Og, king of Bashan at the battle of Edrei because God had determined to deliver Og into their hands (Deut. 3:3). Og was a giant and based on his bed length of 13.5 feet (Deut. 3:11), it has been estimated that Og was between nine feet and thirteen feet tall. Israel was facing a giant and his army again. Different giant, same God. We don't fight for victory. We fight from victory. The same God who gave us the victory before is the same God who can give us the victory again. How many "agains" do we need before we'll start believing that God is bigger than any giant (fear, anxiety, worry, guilt, sickness, depression) that we face?

1 Samuel 17:45-47. Sureness in faith.

In 1935, coached by Melvin B. Tolson, the debate team of Wiley College, a small and unranked Black school in Marshall, Texas, in front of an integrated audience of two thousand people, unexpectedly defeated the all-white reigning national championship team from the University of Southern California. Even though they were denied the national championship because of racism, it was significant because Wiley was the first Historically Black College and University (HBCU) to defeat an all-white school and helped to put an end to scientific racism which falsely

justified European superiority and formidability. The story of the Wiley debate team was made into a film, “The Great Debaters,” starring Denzel Washington as Melvin B. Tolson. This was a classic case of David vs. Goliath, with the unknown small school triumphing over a national giant.

It was David, the unknown shepherd boy from a small town called Bethlehem, in front of an integrated audience (Israelites and Philistines) of thousands, who unexpectedly defeated the nine foot nine, armed to the teeth, national champion of the Philistines, Goliath. Every advantage – his size, armor, experience, and armor-bearer – belonged to Goliath. The question becomes, if Goliath was so formidable, why did he need so much armor, so many weapons, and even an armor bearer to fight an inexperienced shepherd boy armored with only a sling and stones? If the devil is so formidable, why does he need trickery, craftiness, deceit, the lust of eyes, flesh, and the pride of life? Perhaps the enemy fears us more than we realize, and yet not us, but the God who is with us. “Submit to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7).

Conclusion: The Oceanos's final voyage was a seven-day sail along the South African shore when the cruise ship ran into a terrible storm. As the ship began to sink, the captain, most of the ship's officers and crew abandoned ship, failing to notify those onboard. Passenger Moss Hills, a musician, noticed that something was wrong and sent out a Mayday to the South African coast guard. Then, taking matters into their own hands, Moss, his wife Tracy, and other entertainers on board helped organize the evacuation of all 581 passengers and crew via lifeboats and helicopters.

Much like king Saul and his army officers when facing Goliath and the Philistines, those who are expected to lead can let us down. But a young shepherd named David, who also was the “sweet psalmist” or musician of Israel, took matters into his own hands and stepped in to rescue God's people. Are you critical when those in charge fail to lead? Have you considered that it may be a God give opportunity for you to lead?

Author Bio

Dr. Jerome F. Coleman is the lead pastor at the First Baptist Church of Crestmont, Willow Grove, PA., and current Vice-President of the National African American Fellowship (NAAF). He has an earned doctorate in Pastoral Leadership from Carolina University. He is also the grateful husband of Kimberly to whom he has been married 28 years.