
Jehovah-Sabaoth; the Lord of Hosts

1 Samuel 17

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Introduction I saw something in Kroger's some time back that I will never forget. It started out in innocent play. It ended in a living parable that has held my attention ever since.

Kara (my youngest daughter) and I were at Kroger's one day. I suppose we were there to help out with grocery shopping. But our attention was diverted and we were simply walking and playing down one of the aisles. As we were enjoying each other, hand in hand, I began thinking upon how big Kroger's must be to Kara. The rows of merchandise were like skyscrapers to such a little girl. Scores of people were in the store; most of whom towered over her. She might have thought that we were in the land of giants. But the size and speed of the store did not intimidate the tiny 44" human being. You see, in her eyes I'm bigger than all of Kroger's put together. And *big things don't seem big when compared with something bigger.*

As we continued walking through the store she became a bit more independent than I liked. She was still happy and confident in the midst of large people but she was no longer holding my hand. She was getting out in front of me and looking less to me for what she needed and started looking more to herself. And so, I thought a test for this little girl was in order.

As Kara was independently enjoying life I ducked behind a row of paper towels. Using a gap between the products as a peep hole I watched her response. When she realized that I wasn't with her she looked at her puny self and then looked at the giant people and became intimidated. She quickly realized that *big things seem bigger when compared with something smaller.*

Would you agree with me that *How we hold up under tests is determined by our reference point?* Do you think as I do that it is profitable to ask ourselves the question, "With what am I comparing my challenges" (trials, tests, threats, etc.)?

In our passage for today we see this reality played out in vivid display. The text we will be thinking upon for this morning is one of the world's classic narratives. It is the gripping story of David and Goliath. It provides an outstanding example of the Lords' power to give victory against dramatically overwhelming odds in response to faith and courage.

As we continue in our 6 week series exploring some Names of God let's review where we have been.

Recap

Premise and point

Our premise and point for this series is taken from Psalm 9:10a; “Those who know your name put their trust in you”. We notice in this Psalm that to the degree we know the Name of God we will rely upon Him. In other places in the Bible we read similar things “The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous man runs into it and is safe” (Pr.18:10). What we are trying to point out in this series is that the names of God are really references to the character of God. The actual names are merely a portrait of Him to display his greatness and goodness. A. W. Tozer in his classic work The Knowledge of the Holy said “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us” (p.1). Therefore, the teaching focus in this series is not the name being taught, but rather the character of God being emphasized. We want to be like the Psalmist who said, “Some trust in chariots and some in horses but we trust in the Name of the Lord our God” (Ps.20:7).

The first two messages

Two weeks ago we looked at Exodus 3 and noticed at the Name *Yahweh*. God unveils Himself in this passage as the eternal, self-sufficient, unchangeable source of all authority. There was never a time when God wasn't. He always was and is and will be. Therefore the sheer reality of God having no deficiency ought to astound us into obedience like it did Moses. We will be the happy recipients of His rescuing power and love from Satan and sin and hell and judgment if we bow to this sovereign King and submit to His all-wise ways.

Last week we looked at 1Kings 17 and noticed the Name *Jehovah-Jireh*; the Lord provides. We saw that we will live forevermore as we look away from ourselves and look to Jehovah-Jireh who can and will provide all we need. He provides Jesus Christ who bore our sins and judgment on the cross so that we could enjoy life evermore.

This Week

Today we will be exploring the Name *Jehovah-Sabaoth*; the Lord of Hosts. This name appears for the first time in the Bible in 1Samuel 1:3. At Shiloh the tent of meeting was set up when the land of Canaan had been subdued by the Israelites (cf. Josh.18:1). The name appears to have its origin in the period of the conquest. One of my dictionaries thought that it is possible that the name was attributed to the LORD as a result of the dramatic appearance to Joshua of an angelic being called the “commander of the host of the LORD” at the start of the conquest (see Josh.5:13-15). The name portrays the vast power at the LORD's disposal over the angelic hosts. The characteristic of the LORD displayed in this name is nothing shy of almighty power (cf. Ps.46:6-7). The Lord is the commander-in-chief of myriads of angels. We see a glimpse of this in Jesus' words when he was in Gethsemane and was seized and arrested. Peter reached for a sword and cut off the ear of the servant of the high priest. Jesus does not want his followers to rely upon man-made means to achieve

victory in battles. He said, “Put your sword back in its place...for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. Do you think I cannot call on my Father and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?” (Matt.26:52f) [Note: A legion in ancient Rome was a unit of infantry soldiers consisting of 3000-6000 troops.]

To know and appreciate the name Jehovah-Saboath we will first look at people who fell out of communion with God and did not believe Him to be Jehovah-Saboath. In contrast, We then will get a look at this God by noticing a person who believed this attribute and put his trust in Him. Turn with me to 1Samuel 17. Here, we will think together on the story of David and Goliath. <read vv.1-11>

Big things seem bigger...

Vv.1-11

The Challenge

Geography

vv.1-3

In verses 1-3 we are told of the context of the scene. The ongoing war with the Philistines was about to enter a new phase. According to the description “gathered at Socoh, which belongs to Judah” (v.1), shows the Philistines pressing in closer and closer to the Israelites. The point is one of threat and urgency.

Giant

vv.4-10

The threat becomes more menacing when we read the description of Goliath.

The text describes Goliath as one who was selected to represent the Philistines and hold the title of undisputed “champion”. The challenge the Israelites faced increased all the more as we take a look at this giant.

His size

Verse 4 tells us that he was six cubits and a span. This translates to around 9 feet and six inches. And it wasn't merely his size that intimidated the Israelites. Back in Josh.11:21ff we read about the arch enemies of the Israelites; the Anakim. These people likely were the giants of the land to which Genesis refers as the Nephilim. The Bible is portraying here an enemy of God and his people; an enemy that desires to attack and defeat the line of redemption that eventually will lead to the great redeemer; Jesus Christ. (see Gen.6:1ff). We are to understand Goliath as a representative of the great enemy of God and man; Satan himself who seeks to terrify and bring into captivity those who bear the name of the Lord (cf. 1Pet.5:8).

His armor

Verses 5ff tell us what he wore. His helmet was made of bronze. His armor weighed about 126 pounds. His javelin was of bronze. The shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam (the diameter around which the average man's hand could

not reach). The spear's head weighed in at around 15 pounds. His shield carried by an armor bearer was a large rectangular one affording maximum protection.

The point is obvious. The challenge against God's people was real and really big.

His speech

The text tells us that Goliath taunted them. Insults and sneers and verbal abuse were hurled at God's people. The Philistine was defying the ranks of Israel. The giant had no regard for their god. He saw them as "servants of Saul". He looked upon them as pathetic. This test of the Israelites faith lasted for forty days. How will Saul and the Israelites respond to this challenge? What will their attitudes and actions be in the face of such an ominous enemy? The answer to that question is determined by what they will compare the challenge with.

The Response

v.11

The attitude and action of the army of the Lord is sad and can be seen in v.11. "When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid". They were cowards because of one thing. In chapter 16:14 we read about how the Lord took his Spirit away from Saul. This was due according to chapter 15 to the fact that he no longer trusted and obeyed the Lord. He looked upon himself as the important person. He sized up challenges and opportunities by noticing himself and his resources.

In addition, the "servants of Saul" as they were called in v.8 had rejected the Lord according to 8:9. They were not walking with the Lord. They were not worshipping Him. They were dazzled by the standard of the world. They were trusting in their own understanding. They were not believing that the living God was Jehovah-Sabaoth. And as a result of all this they were cowards.

An Application

People (even if they are religious) who are not communing with the living God will compare their challenges with their own resources. Sometimes the challenges are not seen too big because the independent person to him seems pretty big. But what happens when the threat becomes unimaginably large. The marriage looks like it is tearing at the seams, the once cuddly child now a teenager is rebellious and disloyal, the doctor calls back to give the alarming news, the company no longer needs your service, the dreaded "daddy I'm pregnant" is heard, and so forth. How will someone who no longer communes with God handle these types of tests? What response will be given to dismaying challenges when the person does not know God as Jehovah-Sabaoth? The same way Saul and the Israelites handled it as witnessed in vv.11,24 and 32. Dismay and fear is the imagery we have in our text.

If you are a person today who is somewhat religious but does not have fellowship with the Lord you may be able to identify with v.11. Remember: *How we hold up under tests is determined by our reference point?* If Jehovah-Sabaoth; the LORD of hosts is not your reference point you will be Saul-like. If we are the reference point with which we

compare our challenges we will be cowards...plain and simple. Big things seem bigger when compared with smaller things.

Big things don't seem big...

Vv.12-51

Now let's flip the emphasis around as the passage does in vv.12ff. Let's look at someone who believes that God is the living God who is Jehovah-Sabaoth. Let's take a closer look at the anointed one David who demonstrates the perspective and practice we need to walk with God by faith and honor God in trials.

A description of David

So far we looked at the challenge; great and intimidating. And then we noticed the response to this challenge; dismay and dread. This was seen in vv.1-11. The story now takes us to David and his response. The camera, if you will, zooms in on a character known as "a man after God's own heart" (13:14; Acts 13:22). What we are to see in these verses is something about the Lord. Even at the time when all seemed lost to Israel, when there was none in her army that dared to pick up the gauntlet that Goliath had thrown down, God had His man in reserve. In due time he appeared on the scene and vindicated the glorious name of Jehovah and saved the lives of His people.

If vv.1-11 demonstrated how big things seem bigger when compared with something smaller, the following text makes certain how big things don't seem big when compared with something bigger.

We will not be able to read the entire text due to time. Instead, first I'll simply make known the main descriptions of David followed by how and why he responded to the intimidating giant. First, his description. This is found in vv.12-23

What he was like

Seemingly weak and foolish

vv.12-15 talk about his family and how he was the youngest of eight sons. The Lord's choice to rescue His name from disrepute and rescue His people from destruction seemed to natural wisdom and military prudence a weak and foolish one. But isn't this just like the Lord? 1Corinthians 1 makes plain that *God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong.* And He does this so that *no human being might boast in the presence of God* (cf. 1Cor.1:26-31). David, due to the Lord's providence, was not overly impressive to the eye of man. But he was precious to the eye of God (16:7; 13:14).

Seeker after God's own heart

We also notice something significant in v.15. "David went back and forth from Saul to feed his father's sheep at Bethlehem". We must remember that David knows he is to be the future king. He was anointed by Samuel to be King in due

time. We read about this in chapter 16. We also know from 13:14 that Saul's kingdom was to be torn from him and given to a "man after God's own heart".

Knowing that he was to be the next king over Israel doesn't hold sway over David's heart. The palace of Saul possessed no attractions for him. This verse tells us that he returned to the sheepfold. He is different from Saul. He was no seeker after power and prestige. He was a seeker of God's own heart. And as such, having fulfilled his service for the king he now returns to his father's farm.

Shepherding his father's flock with loyalty

Lastly, we see another aspect of a man whose eyes are on the Lord, whose trust is in Jehovah-Sabaoth. In vv.34-35 we read "But David said to Saul, "Your servant used to keep sheep for his father. And when there came a lion or a bear and took a lamb from the flock I went after him and struck him and delivered it out of his mouth". Dropping down to v.37 to see David's experience: "The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine".

Away from the glitter of royalty, away from the crowds and military intrigue, in the solitude of a shepherd's life, David was taught the wondrous resources of grace found in God available to faith. He knew from experience the name of Yahweh that the Lord is almighty. Gigantic was the Lord over the giants of lions and bears. For David, *big things didn't seem big when compared with something bigger.*

David had an eye for the characteristics of the Lord even before he went public to display the courage we are about to see.

How he responded

Having looked briefly at a man who knows the name of the LORD and thus trusts him, we now want to notice how he responded to the challenge. Instead of cowering back from the threat of Goliath David does something striking.

Out of faith; not dismay or discouragement

After Jesse his father sent him to feed his brothers v.22 tells us that he was eager at obeying his dad. Running to the ranks to greet his brothers he hears something disturbing. He hears the taunting of the giant. He notices the ranks of the Lord in dismay. David responds to the challenge out of faith. V.26 intimates that David is gearing up for the battle based on faith in the name of the Lord. This is made plain in v.45 when face to face with the terrible giant he says, "You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel".

"Those who know his Name put their trust in Him" the Bible says. And certainly we see this here. David, in contrast with Saul, responds to danger out of faith not dismay. The response made by David reveals the secret of his confidence, the source of his strength and the certainty of his victory "I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts".

The account also makes note of how he responded out of faith; not discouragement. Starting with v.28 and going to v.37 David was ridiculed and reviled. There was none to encourage him in the endeavor he knew he had to do. Whether it was his oldest brother or the King of Israel mattered not to David. He was operating out of faith; faith in the name of Jehovah-Sabaoth; the Lord of hosts. David knew the LORD. David loved the LORD. David would not be stopped.

In reliance upon the Lord's resources; not man's

Another significant piece of description we find in this narrative is seen in what he used to fight with and what he discarded. Vv.38-40 is a contrast in means. Saul arms David with his own armor. This hints at what Saul thinks is wise and will promote success. Saul is far more confident in his own armor than in the Lord. David tries it on and then attempts to go out. This v.39 says was in vain.

David quickly perceives that this approach was unsuited to one who had faith in Jehovah-Sabaoth. The one who had much to do with God in the pasturelands could not employ such worldly means and methods in public. Instead, David chose five smooth stones over against Saul's armor. God supplied "smooth stones" and man supplied armor. A man after God's own heart chose the former and discarded the latter.

Why he responded

So far we've noticed who David was (a mere young, overlooked shepherd who loved the Lord and knew His name). Due to this, we noticed how he responded to the challenge (which was the very opposite of all Israel; not in fear but in faith). Now we want to see why he responded so courageously. What motivated him to risk his life and stick his neck out into the danger nobody else would?

A passion to preserve God's holy honor

Vv.45-51 is the climax of the episode. We would expect to see motivation in this description. And certainly we do. The man after God's own heart has the Lord's honor and glory before all other considerations. He says, "I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel whom you have defied". Here we notice a passion to preserve God's holy honor.

A passion to promote God's holy honor

Secondly, in relation to David's motivation, we see the ultimate reason for his battling Goliath in v.46. David will strike down Goliath and cut off his head so that *all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel and that all this assembly may know that the Lord saves not with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's.*

Preserving and promoting God's honor were the twin impulses of David's motivation.

Well, I suppose you are much familiar with the wonderful results that little comment on it is required. Knowing the name of the Lord as Jehovah-Sabaoth could announce the victory in advance (v.46). Out of faith, one stone in David's sling was worth more than all the Philistine's armor on the giant of unbelief. Therefore, David winds up and releases the stone. Though David threw it the Lord guided it. Smashing the bronze helmet it embeds into the forehead of the enemy of God and his people. David scurries over and takes Goliath's sword from him in order to kill him. He then cuts off his head as a sign of complete and decisive victory. What a stirring episode. Looking through David's eyes we can see that *big things didn't seem big when compared with something bigger*.

Conclusion

Where are you in all this? Can you locate your life in this story? To help us apply God's living word we could, I suppose, cycle through the various "challenges" we face. We could list fears such as "what will my friends think about me if I really identify with Jesus" or "how do I speak to my spouse about things I'm seeing" or "how are we going to meet budget" or "will my children be okay in this world". The list could go on and on couldn't it?

Having identified some personal threats we then could urge each other to look to the Jehovah-Sabaoth and trust Him in all the trials and tests and tribulations we face. And that would be a good application for us I think. But that is not what I am about to do.

I want to close this message by going right to the most daunting, intimidating and overwhelming giant we all face. This story tells us that:

- ☛ The great enemy of God and man was destroyed by the great anointed King.
- ☛ This grand victory over the great adversary happened by Jehovah-Sabaoth through His anointed King.
- ☛ And this great anointed King is none other than Jesus Christ.

He is the Son of David who died on the cross, raised from the dead and went to his throne and reigns forevermore. When I saw in 1Sam.17:51 the anointed King cutting off the head of the great enemy I could not help but see King Jesus and Satan (cf. Gen.3:15). My mind took me to the passage that I want to take you now. Read with me aloud Hebrews 2:14-15 displayed on the screen.

In these verses, the great Shepherd of our souls, defeated the great enemy of our souls. The Shepherd who cares for the sheep of His Father would not cower back from the taunts and temptations Satan throws at His people. Christ came to vindicate the reputation of God and free His people from the bondage to the fear of death. The great sword of the enemy had to be taken from his hand. The only weapon Satan has over people is unforgiven sin. And so, Christ took our sins on himself and suffered for them thereby destroying the one who stand as the giant against us.

Freedom from fear of dying was in the sights of the Great Shepherd and anointed King. Our great enemy; the devil and death, are no longer our enemy. His head, as it were, was cut off at the cross. We no longer need to live in the fear of death. We are the freest people on earth. And that freedom is to be employed in serving one another through love (Gal.5).

Do you know of someone trembling due to the fact that something big seems bigger because it is compared with something smaller? In light of this message, how will you help them with their reference point?

Do you tremble under the thought of death? Do you catch yourself changing your thoughts through activities when you began thinking upon death?

O beloved, we do not need to fear any longer. Jesus Christ accomplished what our hearts need the most; forgiveness of sins and a righteousness that will stand uncondemned in front of the great God and judge of the universe at the end of life. Trust in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the Cross. Trust Him for all you need today.



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