



You, Goliath, & God

The Story of Scripture – Part 12

In the beginning of February, we started reading through the story of the Bible together. Many of you have been a part of that. I've heard so many people say how fruitful this has been. I want to encourage you to keep it up, keep going, don't stop. If you have stopped, you can start back up this week. If you're just now joining us, you can start; just can download the Bible Reading Plan from our website. We're on Week 13 and we're reading through the story of Scripture chronologically.

I thought it would be helpful just to pause and think about where we are in this story. Hopefully this will help if you're behind or just starting with us, or if you're following along, it will remind you of what we've been reading. Here's the way I would summarize the story of Scripture from cover to cover in the Bible. This is the big picture storyline of the Bible.

God is redeeming a people by His grace for His glory among all peoples.

God is redeeming—making new—a people by His grace for His glory among all peoples. I use that language particularly in light of what we celebrated last week: new life. People were celebrating forgiveness of sin, new life in Jesus. This is what God is doing in the world.

It started with Genesis, where we saw creation, sin and the promise of redemption. In the beginning of the Bible, as soon as God creates man and woman, they sin. They rebel against God. Yet God promises to send a Redeemer, One Who will save us from our sin. The rest of the book of Genesis is filled with promises: to save, redeem, make a new people by God's grace and for God's glory among all peoples. Remember God's promise to Abraham? At the very beginning of the people of Israel, God says, "I will bless you so that all the nations of the earth will be blessed through you. All the nations of the earth will come to know My grace and glory through you."

That leads then to the book of Exodus, where we see God's people—the Israelites—freed from slavery to worship, freed by God's grace to enjoy and exalt God's glory. In Leviticus, God gives His people laws for life, for their good. In Numbers we see disobedience and death, as God's people don't trust Him. They turn back from following Him into the land God had promised them and an entire generation dies in the wilderness as a result.

That then leads to Deuteronomy, which is a repeating of God's law as a new generation prepares to go into the Promised Land. Moses tells them, "Choose life. Obey God. This is the way to life." This is

a word we constantly need to hear. God's Word and God's ways are good. They lead to life. So trust God's ways. Obey God's Word. This is life.

That leads to Joshua and the conquest of the Promised Land. As soon as God's people enter into that land, they turn to all kinds of idolatry and immorality, setting the stage for the book of Judges, one of my least favorite books in the Bible in a sense, because it shows the consequences of forgetting God. There are horrible stories of sin and evil in the book, but stories we need to see so we remember God, His Word and His ways. Judges is summed up in our memory verse from this last week—Judges 21:25: *"In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes."*

Thankfully, though, God is gracious, so in Ruth we see the beauty of redemption. This is one of my favorite books in the Bible. I almost preached on it today but decided to save it until December after this series is over. The book of Ruth leads in to 1 Samuel, where God's people reject God as their king. They want a leader like other nations around them, so they go in search of a king. This leads to the stories of Saul, David and Solomon that we're going to read about in the next few weeks.

The reason I walked through all this is that I don't want you to miss the overarching plot line here. The Bible is a story about how God is redeeming, saving, making a new people by His grace for His glory among all nations. This plot line is important, because you and I are a part of it. This is not just the story of Scripture; this is your story and my story. Think about what we celebrated last week with Easter with people from all nations, people groups and ethnicities getting baptized. It was not just one type of people. The church is a new people made up of all kinds of people who are redeemed, saved and made new by God's grace and for God's glory.

This story is continuing today. It's our story and Scripture comes to life when you realize that we're reading is our story. What I want to do today is take one of the most well-known stories in the Bible—the story of David and Goliath—and see how this story relates to your story. I know that so many of you are walking through challenges in your life right now. Many of you are facing giant challenges—giant struggles, giant grief, giant pain, giant hurt.

I'll go ahead and tell you up front: the point of this story is not to inspire you to go out on your own and take on giant whatevers in the world. There are a variety of best-selling books that use this story toward that end, but they all miss the whole point of the story. I want to show you the point, but in order to get to the point, we need to see three levels of this story. There's individual history happening here in 1 Samuel 17. There's national history in the Old Testament for the people of Israel. Then there is redemptive history happening now. That's the big picture and it includes our story. If we miss these three levels, we will miss the point.

Three levels to this story: Individual history

At the base level, this is a story about a boy and a giant. It's one of the longest stories in the Bible and for sure it's the longest story we have of David. That's part of the design. The author gives us tons of details here and in a sense stretches out the story because he wants it to stick out in the minds of

those who read it. I want to walk through the story and let the details stick out so we don't miss the point. We'll almost go verse by verse through 1 Samuel 17, starting in verse one:

¹ Now the Philistines gathered their armies for battle. And they were gathered at Socoh, which belongs to Judah, and encamped between Socoh and Azekah, in Ephes-dammim.

² And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered, and encamped in the Valley of Elah, and drew up in line of battle against the Philistines. ³ And the Philistines stood on the mountain on the one side, and Israel stood on the mountain on the other side, with a valley between them.

So get the picture. We have a valley with a dry ravine in the middle between two mountains. The Philistines are on one mountain; the Israelites are on the other. The battle is going to be waged in the valley in between. Here's what happens in verse four: *"And there came out from the camp of the Philistines a champion named Goliath of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span."* A "champion." That's the first and only time that word is ever used in the Old Testament. It literally means "the man between two armies." He was indeed the man in every way. Six cubits and a span—most estimate this means he was about nine feet nine inches tall. NBA material, to say the least. The brother can dunk basically without lifting his hands above his head. He's practically looking at the rim.

And he's not just tall. When you see really tall basketball players, often they're kind of lanky and a little awkward. Not Goliath. Check this out in verse five: *"He had a helmet of bronze on his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail, and the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of bronze."* Five thousand shekels is about 125 pounds. He's wearing what some of the Israelites weigh. In addition, verses six and seven state, *"And he had bronze armor on his legs, and a javelin of bronze slung between his shoulders. The shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron."* So that means his iron spear weighed about 15 pounds. Then we read, *"And his shield-bearer went before him."* He has a side-kick with him who carries a shield the size of a man.

So into the first facet of this individual history comes an invincible character named Goliath. This is the most detailed description of a warrior anywhere in the Bible. In the back of our minds, remember what the previous chapter said: *"The Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart"* (1 Samuel 16:7). Apparently the Israelites were looking at the outward appearance too. Listen to what happened:

⁸ He stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, "Why have you come out to draw up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not servants of Saul? Choose a man for yourselves, and let him come down to me. ⁹ If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will be your servants. But if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall be our servants and serve us." ¹⁰ And the Philistine said, "I defy the ranks of Israel this day. Give me a man, that we may fight together."

The next facet of this story is an impossible challenge: defeat the giant. Basically Goliath issued a challenge for a game of one-on-one—*mono a mono*—winner take all. This is Ultimate Fighting Championship to the extreme.

When I was growing up, my older brother Steve was the high school heavyweight state wrestling champion. He was the man. In that state championship match, he took on a 300-pound dude and threw him to the ground.

I, on the other hand...? As one country guy used to say, “David, I think you got pushed away from the trough.” Needless to say, whenever Steve wanted to practice wrestling moves, I had enough sense to know one-on-one was not a good idea. I could outrun him, so my reaction was to run fast and always be looking back over my shoulder. That’s how I grew up.

So what do the Israelites do when the heavyweight champion comes down? Verse 11: *“When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid.”* Goliath calls them “slaves of Saul.” The implication was that they were soon to be subject to the Philistine army. He heaps shame on them and defies them. They’re shrinking back in fear before this nine-foot-nine-inch giant dressed in battle gear. This is almost like a movie. You have Saul and the entire Israelite army intimidated by this giant, then all of a sudden the camera shifts to a nice grassy meadow where a handsome shepherd boy is tending sheep.

¹² Now David was the son of an Ephrathite of Bethlehem in Judah, named Jesse, who had eight sons. In the days of Saul the man was already old and advanced in years.

¹³ The three oldest sons of Jesse had followed Saul to the battle. And the names of his three sons who went to the battle were Eliab the firstborn, and next to him Abinadab, and the third Shammah. ¹⁴ David was the youngest. The three eldest followed Saul, ¹⁵ but David went back and forth from Saul to feed his father’s sheep at Bethlehem. ¹⁶ For forty days the Philistine came forward and took his stand, morning and evening.

While his three brothers are off at war, David is taking care of the animals back home. His father Jesse calls him in and says to him, *“Take for your brothers an ephah of this parched grain, and these ten loaves, and carry them quickly to the camp to your brothers. Also take these ten cheeses to the commander of their thousand. See if your brothers are well, and bring some token from them”* (verses 17-18). Jesse says, “You know your brothers are out fighting while you’re looking after the animals, so you need to take them some food, find out how they are and bring back a token from them.” Just think about the token he’ll bring back. How about the head of a giant? Would that be sufficient as a token? Jesse has no idea what David is about to bring back.

¹⁹ Now Saul and they and all the men of Israel were in the Valley of Elah, fighting with the Philistines. ²⁰ And David rose early in the morning and left the sheep with a keeper and took the provisions and went, as Jesse had commanded him. And he came to the encampment as the host was going out to the battle line, shouting the war cry.

Basically that’s a journey David made of about 15 miles; a nice half-marathon run in the morning for him. After he gets there, the story continues in verse 21:

²¹ And Israel and the Philistines drew up for battle, army against army. ²² And David left the things in charge of the keeper of the baggage and ran to the ranks and went and greeted his brothers. ²³ As he talked with them, behold, the champion, the Philistine of

Gath, Goliath by name, came up out of the ranks of the Philistines and spoke the same words as before. And David heard him. ²⁴ All the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him and were much afraid.

That's like me with my older brother. David is having a conversation with his brothers and others, then all of a sudden Goliath comes out and shouts. Just to get another picture of how towering Goliath is, his voice resounds throughout a camp of thousands, enough to silence all the other conversations and send everybody into a panic. This had been happening for 40 days. Every day this Philistine comes out, shaming the people of Israel and in turn the God of Israel.

Think about what goes through David's head. Maybe for the first time in his life, David hears the name of the Lord ridiculed. As soon as he hears it, he sees everybody running in fear. That provokes a conversation where David finds out Saul's battle strategy. What's interesting is that Saul is really the only one in the camp who is physically qualified to fight Goliath. Earlier in 1 Samuel we see that Saul stands head and shoulders above everybody else. He's the supposed leader-king of the people.

Verse 25: *"And the men of Israel said, 'Have you seen this man who has come up? Surely he has come up to defy Israel. And the king will enrich the man who kills him with great riches and will give him his daughter and make his father's house free in Israel.'"* So number one, the reward is great riches—to enjoy, of course, only if he lives. Two, whoever fights Goliath gets Saul's daughter; although we find out later she might not be that much of a reward. Three, his family will be free in Israel. In other words, no taxes, no obligations. How many here would like a tax exemption? We might have some takers for Saul here today.

Listen to how David responds in verse 26: *"And David said to the men who stood by him, 'What shall be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?'"* Notice how David describes Goliath in a totally different way than the Israelites were describing him. "This Philistine not just defying Israel, he's defying the armies of the living God. Who's going to take away this shame and disgrace from Israel?" Verse 27: *"And the people answered him in the same way, 'So shall it be done to the man who kills him.'"*

Out of all of Jesse's sons, Eliab is the one who looks like he should be the next king. But look what he says in verse 28: *Now Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spoke to the men. And Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, 'Why have you come down? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your presumption and the evil of your heart, for you have come down to see the battle.'"* He says, "David, aren't you responsible for just a few sheep?"

David responds, *"What have I done now? Was it not but a word?"* In other words, "I'm just asking a question, bro. Calm down." Verse 30: *"And he turned away from him toward another, and spoke in the same way, and the people answered him again as before."* Now word starts to get out that

David is interested in taking on the giant—and that word gets to Saul. Verse 31: *“When the words that David spoke were heard, they repeated them before Saul, and he sent for him.”*

The stage is now set for the present king and the future king to come face to face with one another and for us as readers to see the stark contrast between the two of them. Look at verse 32: *“And David said to Saul, ‘Let no man’s heart fail because of him. Your servant will go and fight with this Philistine.’”* See the boldness and courage and confidence. Verse 33: *“You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him, for you are but a youth, and he has been a man of war from his youth.”* Saul looks at the situation like the world looks at the situation. David, a nice-looking guy, maybe at the most 20 years old. A shepherd, but definitely not a soldier.

³⁴ 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, ³⁵ I went after him and struck him and delivered it out of his mouth. And if he arose against me, I caught him by his beard and struck him and killed him. ³⁶ Your servant has struck down both lions and bears, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, for he has defied the armies of the living God.” ³⁷ And David said, “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.”

David gives an impassioned plea and I love the implication here. Basically he says, “You have no clue, Saul, who the giant in this picture is. Yahweh, the Lord, has been defied and He will destroy. Just like He’s done when I’ve taken on lions and bears in the past, the Lord is a Deliverer. The Lord is the Giant. Goliath is a dwarf compared to Him.”

Isn’t it ultimately a matter of perspective? What challenge, trial, temptation or difficulty will you face that is ultimately not dwarfed by the greatness of God? Things before us in our lives look so big, but they are not. God is big and He is able to destroy anything and anyone who would rob Him of glory. The Lord of Hosts—He is the giant. So Saul said to David, *“Go, and the Lord be with you!”*

Now listen to what Saul does. Note the contrast in verse 38: *“Then Saul clothed David with his armor. He put a helmet of bronze on his head and clothed him with a coat of mail, and David strapped his sword over his armor.”* The author gives us this picture of David robed in all the stuff this world offers for battle. See the irony here: Saul telling David how to have victory when Saul is scared to do anything himself.

But the armor overtakes David. Verse 39: *“And he tried in vain to go, for he had not tested them. Then David said to Saul, ‘I cannot go with these, for I have not tested them,’ So David put them off.”* This is a picture, not just of David’s dependence on the power of God, but also a picture of David rejecting Saul’s approach to kingship. Saul was dressed in ostentatious armor like the kings of other nations, but David would have none of it. He will go out like a shepherd in the line of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses before him, trusting in the promise and provision of God.

Verse 40: *“Then he took his staff in his hand and chose five smooth stones from the brook and put them in his shepherd’s pouch. His sling was in his hand, and he approached the Philistine.”* These

stones were most likely the size of tennis balls. Goliath, dressed in all his armor that man has constructed, versus David, holding five stones that God Himself has shaped. So the stage is set for the royal rumble. The clash of champions. The rally in the valley. In one corner, weighing in at who-knows-how-many pounds—probably more than David in his armor alone—is Goliath of Gath. In the other corner, a simple shepherd boy whose armor was too big for him.

⁴¹ And the Philistine moved forward and came near to David, with his shield-bearer in front of him. ⁴² And when the Philistine looked and saw David, he disdained him, for he was but a youth, ruddy and handsome in appearance. ⁴³ And the Philistine said to David, “Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?” And the Philistine cursed David by his gods.

I want to show you something in a minute, but just hold on to the phrase that he “*cursed David by his gods.*” At this point, just remember: all the way back to God’s initial promise to His people through Abraham in Genesis 12:3: “*I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse.*” Little did Goliath know that in cursing David he was eliciting a curse upon himself from God.

Verse 44: “*The Philistine said to David, ‘Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and to the beasts of the field.’*” Not to be outdone in pregame trash talk, David said to the Philistine:

⁴⁵ “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, whom you have defied. ⁴⁶ This 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 host of the Philistines this day to the birds of the air and to the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, ⁴⁷ and that all this assembly may know that the LORD saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the LORD’s, and he will give you into our hand.”

Yes! “Today you, Goliath, and all the Philistines behind you and all these Israelites will know that the Lord, the God of Hosts, saves those who trust in Him. Now we’re getting to the point. Apparently this story is not about a boy who’s a shepherd. This is a story about a God Who saves. That fires Goliath up, so he starts coming to David.

⁴⁸ When the Philistine arose and came and drew near to meet David, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine. ⁴⁹ And David put his hand in his bag and took out a stone and slung it and struck the Philistine on his forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell on his face to the ground. ⁵⁰ So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and struck the Philistine and killed him. There was no sword in the hand of David.

Now we know that, so why does the author tell us again? He wants to be clear that the Lord does not save with sword and spear. There is something greater going on here. You don’t defy the name of God. It’s no coincidence that the penalty for blasphemy in Leviticus is stoning, which is exactly how Goliath is killed—with a stone.

Then watch this in verse 51: “*Then David ran and stood over the Philistine and took his sword and drew it out of its sheath and killed him and cut off his head with it.*” There’s some debate over exactly when Goliath died. He was pretty much out cold from the time his forehead was introduced to a rock, so death could have been any time after that. But the picture is that Goliath is stoned and ultimately finished off with his own sword.

Let’s pause here with this picture of Goliath the Philistine lying headless on the ground before the God of Israel and turn back to 1 Samuel 5. You’ve got to see this. Here’s a story about when the Philistines captured the ark of God which symbolized the presence of God’s glory in the midst of His people. They brought the ark into the temple of their god Dagon. Listen to what happened:

When the Philistines captured the ark of God, they brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod. ² Then the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it into the house of Dagon and set it up beside Dagon. ³ And when the people of Ashdod rose early the next day, behold, Dagon had fallen face downward on the ground before the ark of the Lord. So they took Dagon and put him back in his place. ⁴ But when they rose early on the next morning, behold, Dagon had fallen face downward on the ground before the ark of the Lord, and the head of Dagon and both his hands were lying cut off on the threshold. Only the trunk of Dagon was left to him.

The god of the Philistines lay decapitated before the God of Israel. Now, the giant of the Philistines lay decapitated before the God of Israel. You do not defy the Lord. God delivers His people and deserves all glory. Go back to 1 Samuel 17:51-54:

⁵¹ When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled. ⁵² And the men of Israel and Judah rose with a shout and pursued the Philistines as far as Gath and the gates of Ekron, so that the wounded Philistines fell on the way from Shaaraim as far as Gath and Ekron. ⁵³ And the people of Israel came back from chasing the Philistines, and they plundered their camp. ⁵⁴ And David took the head of the Philistine and brought it to Jerusalem, but he put his armor in his tent.

Basically they chased the Philistines all the way back to Gath, Goliath’s home town, where they plundered their camp. The story began with Goliath introduced as the champion, but in the end—in the last part of this story of individual history—his head was in the hands of an improbable champion: David the shepherd king. That is the story of a boy named David and a giant named Goliath, but it’s bigger than that. I want you to think with me now about national history.

Three levels to this story: National history

Take a step back, almost like you’re looking at a map app and you broaden out the map a bit. This is a story, not just about two individuals; it’s a story about the history of God’s people in the Old Testament. This is often the way Old Testament stories work, whether it’s Abraham offering his son Isaac on the altar or the people of Israel being delivered out of slavery in Egypt through the Passover. They’re not just individual stories; they’re the stories of a people in the Old Testament.

Here God's people were struggling in the Promised Land, due to their disobedience, facing threats, battles and attacks from an invincible character: surrounding nations. One commentator said about the Philistines in particular, "The power of this rival on the coastal plain remained the chief national security issue for the Israelites residing in the central mountains." They were facing danger and the ark had already been captured. They were facing an impossible challenge: deliver God's people from their enemies, in this case the Philistines. Who's going to do it? Saul? Is this the leader of Israel who's going to deliver God's people from their enemies? He's sitting back doing nothing, scared to do anything. This sets the stage for an improbable champion: David the conquering king.

We don't have time to read it today, but the rest of the story continues in the next chapter where David is praised above King Saul. This is a story about God's provision of another king for His people, a king who will show that there is a God in Israel Who reigns over all. This is a story about how God fights for His people, how God is worthy of trust and worthy of worship among His people. This is not just a story about David and Goliath—it's a story about the people of Israel and surrounding nations. But then, don't stop there. Keep broadening out, because that's not all.

Three levels to this story: Redemptive history

Think about what's going on in this story—not just at the level of individual or national history—but take this another step out and realize that this story fits into all of redemptive history, pointing to a much, much greater battle, a much, much greater challenge for the people of God, and a much, much more important champion. On the grand scale of human, see the invincible character: Satan. Goliath and all of his idolatry, all of his blasphemy, is a picture of someone much greater: the devil.

Think about it. He's the one who wooed the Philistines to worship Dagon. He's the one who had wooed surrounding nations to worship false Gods. He's the one who had wooed the Israelites into idolatry and immorality in the land. He's the same adversary who has wooed every single one of us to turn and defy the one true God in our own hearts through sin. Second Timothy 2:26 says we are all slaves in the snare of Satan, prone to sin. It looks different in all our lives, but that's the reality in each of our hearts.

So this small story is part of a much greater story, with an invincible character and an impossible challenge: destroy sin and death. Satan is holding our hearts captive and who will take him on? Who will war against the prince of this world? Who will fight the evil one who is set on destroying God's people and defaming God's glory? Who's going to take him on? None of us can. We run in fear. All of us fall prey to temptation to sin—every single one of us.

Until an unlikely Champion steps out of the shadows, from a humble stable in Bethlehem—the same town David is from, I might add. He stares sin and death and Satan in the face, all the way to a cross. Under the power of the Lord of Hosts He dies for sin and then rises from the grave. The improbable Champion of redemptive history is Jesus, the ultimate King. Ladies and gentlemen, Jesus is

the ultimate Champion Who has killed the ultimate giant—and that’s the point of this story. Sin and Satan and death have been destroyed by Jesus.

Now we can realize how the story applies to our lives. The story is about so much more than little David being brave and courageous in fighting a giant. We’ve been told, “You can go out and be brave and courageous and fight all the giants in your life.” Do you see how dangerous that is? If that’s the point, who’s the hero of this story? David. If that’s the point, then this story will inspire you to go out and make yourself the hero of your story, when in reality you will have missed the entire point. This passage is not about David or you or me being a hero. This passage is about the reality that God is the Hero and what God can do when people trust in Him.

Now see how this story applies to your life when you face seemingly impossible challenges in your story, when you face grief, pain, hurt or struggles that cause you to think, “How can I get through this?” We all face seemingly impossible challenges. Some of you are facing them right now. So what does this story compel you to do?

When you face seemingly impossible challenges in your story, desire God’s glory more than anything else.

The point of this story is not to be brave in the face of giants. The point of this story is to be passionate about the glory of God. Think about David here. He never saw Goliath as a giant, because he knew God was greater. David loved, revered, honored and defended the name of God, which drove him to go out on that battlefield.

I want to encourage you to live in the same way when you face challenges in your life, your family, your work. More than you desire anything else, desire God to be glorified in that challenge. That’s a very different way to look at challenges, because now our prayer first and foremost is not, “God, please make this challenge go away. Please bring this challenge to an end.” Now our prayer is, “God, please glorify Your name and if that means this challenge stays, so be it, because I want Your glory more than I want anything else.”

I think about Luzette, one of the many people walking through cancer in this church. I think about her testimony, saying, “I want this cancer to go away, yes, but even more than that, I want God to be glorified. If that means trusting God and being satisfied in God while I’m enduring cancer, showing this world that God is better than health, then so be it.” I think about my mom, who’s in town here this morning. I think about her love for my dad, who died suddenly years ago. Although the hurt, pain and grief has been hard over the years, I praise God for how she has trusted God and desired His glory over and above everything else. This is evident in real pain and real tears with real trust and real desire for God and His glory.

When we face challenges in our lives, do we desire God’s glory above everything else? And not just with challenges in our lives, but also with challenges in the world. This is why Dale is going out, and

we're behind him. It's why Nate and others are planting churches. Why Kate—one of our sisters in Christ—is moving to the Middle East soon. It's why I pray God will send many people out from here, across the city and around the world, not because it's easy, but because God's name is not being glorified in so many places among so many people.

We want to make His glory known, more than we want comfort, more than we want ease, more than we want anything else. No other gods are worthy of worship. God alone is worthy of worship. We're not going to sit idly by while His name is not known, while His name is not worshiped.

We are a people redeemed, made new by His grace, for the spread of His glory among all people, starting right here in Washington, DC. So live for God's glory in your workplace, in your school, in this city. Desire God's glory in your lives, in your work, in your marriages, in your families, in this church, more than desiring anything else.

When you face seemingly impossible challenges in your story, trust in God's power over everything else.

Hear David's confidence in the power of God: "The Lord Who delivered me from the lion and the bear will deliver me from this Philistine. The battle is the Lord's. He will give you into our hands."

So I ask you: what challenge will you face that is too big for your God? Nothing. That's the whole point of Easter last week and of our celebration every single Sunday. The greatest challenge any one of us will ever face—death—has been defeated. So remember the words from God to Joshua in Joshua 1:9: "*Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.*"

This encouragement becomes all the greater in the New Testament. Listen to these words from Colossians 2:14-15: "*The record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands...he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.*" Did you hear that? Satan has been defeated. What this means is that in any and every battle we face in this world, we do not fight for victory. Victory has already been won. We don't fight for victory; we fight from victory and that's a huge difference.

Let this soak in. If this is not clear in your mind, you will not experience much victory in your life. If you don't let this lodge deeply, you will be confused and defeated as you try to live out the Christian life. You will miss out on being on the front lines of living for God's glory, if you don't hold on to the truth that when we face challenges, we're not trying to win. Those who are in Christ have already won. First John 4:4: "*He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.*" The Spirit of Christ dwells in you, Christian. That means whenever you clash with this world and the evil one, you have the upper hand. You have the victory. Satan is a defeated foe.

Think about it this way. On the morning of April 9, 1865, General Robert E. Lee and Ulysses Grant met to sign an agreement marking the end of the United States Civil War. The war had ended.

Peace had been accomplished. But interestingly, down in the South, the battle still raged. Even though the Civil War was technically over, the Battle of Fort Blakeley still took place. The fighting was just as real, the guns and bayonets were just as devastating, death was just as brutal. The war had been decided, but the fighting wasn't over. The fighting was just as deadly as it had always been. Peace had yet to be enforced to its final end. The struggle still continued. Justice and peace were yet to be enforced completely in the South.

This is not a perfect picture, but it does capture a bit of what I think we see in the struggles we find ourselves in right now. The victory has been accomplished. Satan has been defeated. Jesus' victory has yet to be enforced completely in this world. But one day He is coming back to enforce His victory fully and finally, then evil will be totally abolished.

When you face seemingly impossible challenges in your story, look every day at every moment to Jesus as your Champion.

So I give you this last encouragement. Amidst whatever challenges you face in your story, this is the point: look every day at every moment to Jesus as your Champion. This is much better news than just saying, "Trust in yourselves to fight giants in your lives." Look to Jesus in your life, the ultimate Champion, and realize He is with you. He will never leave you (Hebrews 13:5). In every temptation and sin you encounter, in every trial and struggle you experience, do not fear, because Jesus, the Lord of Hosts, lives inside of you.

Do not fear and do not forget the story line that God is redeeming and making people new by His grace for His glory among all peoples. And one day, the battle will be over and eternal victory will be ours. Our Champion guarantees it. That's the point of the story.

Let's pray.

Jesus, we praise You as the ultimate Champion. We praise You for dying on a cross for our sin, rising from the grave and for the hope You give. I pray especially for those who are walking through challenges right now. I pray that You would lift their eyes to You and give them the strength, peace and hope they need. Help them trust in You as their Champion. Give them grace for every emotion, every decision, every step. We praise You that when we face challenges in our stories, we are not alone. Help us to live for Your glory and help us to trust in Your power as we anticipate the Day when challenges will be no more and we will be with You, free from sin, free from sorrow and free from suffering. All glory be to Your name for making that promise a reality. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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