

Now That the Victory Is Won?



Gary Wilkerson November 26, 2012

The question mark in my title is intentional. As Christians we know that Jesus won the victory for us at Calvary. He defeated death, Satan and the power of sin. The question remaining for believers is, “Now what? I know Jesus won my victory on the cross. But what about my present conflict? Where is his victory for the battle raging in my life right now?”

It’s an important question — and 1 Samuel contains an answer for every Christian. It begins with this scene: “The Philistines gathered their armies for battle...at Socoh, which belongs to Judah” (1 Samuel 17:1). This image presents a spiritual truth that never changes: The forces of darkness are arrayed against God’s people. When Jesus became your Savior, he made you a new creation — but although you changed, the world didn’t.

Because of this, there are powers that align themselves against you — the world, the devil and even your own flesh, which wars against your spirit. Sometimes our battles with these forces are external: attacks on your marriage, your finances, your children. Our church office sees a constant flow of people seeking counseling on all these issues. Any Christian family is a testimony to God, and Satan is determined to see that testimony destroyed. Not only is the devil against your family, but so is much of the world.

Sometimes our battles are internal. We’re nagged by worries: “Can my marriage survive this long, cold silence?” “Will my child ever give his life to the Lord?” “Am I even worthy to call myself a Christian?” All these pressures push us toward doubt and despair, causing us to wonder, “Where is God in all this? I can’t see him beyond my daily battles.”

At times we cry, “Enough!” and decide to draw a line in the sand. We tell ourselves, “I’m tired of being beaten up by the enemy. Satan, you may come this far but no farther. You shall not pass!” That last phrase—“You shall not pass!” — worked wonderfully in *The Lord of the Rings*. But it doesn’t happen so frequently in our daily lives. How many times have you drawn a line only to see the devil cross it? When that happened you probably drew another line and said, “Okay, devil, this is final. To here and no farther!” But the devil crossed it again.

Recently, my wife, Kelly, and I experienced this. We recognized Satan was advancing in a certain area of our family, so we determined to align our hearts against him. We clutched hands and prayed with all intensity, “Lord, we refuse to see the devil take this from us. His victories stop here. We rebuke you, Satan!” But the attack continued with greater ferocity.

That’s what happened to Israel as they faced the Philistines. “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” (17:3). Saul lined up all his men to stop the Philistines’ advance, achieving a kind of standoff. Did that stop the enemy? Not at all. The Philistines brought out a greater weapon in Goliath, a giant of a man:

“Goliath of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span. 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. 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” (17:4-7). Here is what the enemy does whenever we draw a line: He doesn’t flee but comes back with fiercer weapons!

When the odds of victory appear fifty-fifty, we may do battle in our own strength. But when we face a towering Goliath, all our confidence drains away — and Satan turns up the heat. Scripture says Goliath taunted the Israelites daily: “Choose a man for yourselves, and let him come down to me” (17:8). You can imagine what this did to the Israelites: “When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid” (17:11).

The giant’s taunts went on for forty days. Every day Israel’s mighty warriors grew more dismayed, downcast, filled with shame. They questioned their own hearts: “What’s wrong with me? Where has my courage gone?”

Maybe you’ve heard the same kinds of taunts lately from the enemy of your soul. You feel overwhelmed — by relational problems, by temptations, by impossible circumstances — and the voices come often: “This battle is too big for you. You might as well give up.” I know how baffled Kelly and I were. We thought, “Lord, we rebuke the enemy, we do all that your Word instructs, but Satan just keeps gaining. What’s going on?”

God sometimes allows our enemy to appear too big for us to handle — and he does so for a reason.

When the Lord led Israel into the Promised Land, he gave them victory over thirty enemy nations — but he allowed five hostile nations to remain in the land. Why? The Bible says God wanted to train Israel’s hands for war. With so many enemies remaining, Israel had to remain dependent on the Lord for everything.

This is the age-old lesson of *Christus Victor*. That’s the Latin phrase the early church fathers used to describe Jesus. Roughly translated, it means, “Our victory is not in ourselves, but in Christ.” If we defeat an enemy when the odds are fifty-fifty, we’re tempted to think, “I won the battle.” But when our enemy is nine feet tall — when we’ve rebuked him but he comes back stronger; when we’ve exhausted all our resources; when we’ve thrown up our hands and said, “I can’t do this” — that’s when God says, “I have you right where I want you.”

Two simple words changed everything for Israel — and the same words apply for us today. After forty days of enduring evil accusations, this phrase brought about a radical shift for Israel: “Now David...” (17:12). These two words open the next part of the story, as if to say, “You’re about to read this in a whole different light.”

Most of us were taught the story of David and Goliath in Sunday school. Usually Old Testament stories are taught to children not as spiritual truths but for moral instruction. For example, the lesson of Jonah is usually presented as, “Don’t disobey God or you’ll get in deep trouble.” The lesson of David’s story is usually presented as, “Be brave and courageous.”

The trouble with this interpretation of David’s story is that we’re teaching our children to do something they’re unable to do. There wasn’t a single Israelite soldier who could have survived a hand-to-hand fight with Goliath. That battle was beyond even the bravest man.

Likewise, when we’re in a spiritual battle, bravery and boldness aren’t sufficient. David knew he was no match for Goliath. In fact, he wasn’t even a soldier yet; he was too young and even comically small (see 17:38- 39). The only thing David was armed with when he showed up at the battlefield was bread and cheese for his soldier brothers! Yet here was the difference with David: He knew the battle wasn’t his but God’s. When he heard Goliath’s taunts, he testified:

“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, 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” (17:46-47, my emphasis).

Spiritual victory is never our own; it comes from our Deliverer. In this story David is a picture of our Deliverer, Christ. He cuts through all our anguish and despair with an authority no demon can stand up to. Goliath had no chance that day, for one reason: The battle was the Lord’s.

God isn’t calling any of us to be a hero; instead, he acts as our Hero. He is our strength and deliverance. He allows our giants for one reason: The greater the enemy, the greater the glory God gets with his victory. He wants to prove himself strong on behalf of his people, and to draw all humankind to himself as they behold his mighty works.

Something amazing happened after David slew Goliath.

“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...When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled. 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” (17:50-52).

The tide turned so dramatically that Israel put the stumbling Philistines to flight. Most important in this passage is one short phrase: “There was no sword in the hand of David.” God proved himself faithful through David’s trust — and that filled every Israelite soldier with faith. All mockery and shame were gone, and the Israelites’ confidence returned — a confidence that their God would do battle for them.

Here is the profound effect of seeing God’s power on our behalf: Our confidence is renewed to enter the fray. The battle is Christ’s, who calls to us, “Come see my hand of victory. I have cut off the head of your accuser!” We are now empowered to follow, saying, “Lord, you haven’t abandoned me. You allowed all of this — every setback, even the taunts. And you did it in mercy so that I might believe you.”

Still, many of us wonder, “When will the Lord move on my behalf?” The answer to that is, Jesus has already moved. He did it 2,000 years ago on the cross; that is when your victory was secured. His triumph on the cross is the same victory that puts to flight every giant in our lives. Your marriage may be suffering, but Christ has defeated the powers of darkness arrayed against you and your spouse. Your finances may not be in order, but your Lord has prepared for you a future and a hope. Your children may not lead the godly life you envision for them, but Jesus has purchased their salvation. We may have battles on many fronts, but Christ has secured our victory.

Are you now able to see your foe defeated? Think of all the accusing voices you hear. You can answer them all: “This is the end for you, devil. Jesus’ victory has put you to flight. My victory is already sealed and won. Whenever he chooses, my Hero will demonstrate that victory, and the world will behold him in all his glory. All will know that the battle is not with the sword and spear, but with the Lord.” Amen!

[Download PDF](#) [1]

Links

[1] <http://worldchallenge.org/printpdf/323/>