

# When Doing Nothing Is Not an Option

*The Life of David*

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Well, there can't be many better known passages in Scripture than 1 Samuel 17. And David and this epic contest with Goliath, the giant descendant of Anak. We will see in a moment huge, nine feet tall was he, well, we think something in that region. Huge. Not the sort of person that you would be eager to run into on the proverbial dark night. This is quite a somebody. And yet, there he is. And we read part of the narrative, but I do advise read it all and go on reading, because it's a gripping narrative. This whole portion of Scripture lively in terms of description of events, and what happens, and what happens next.

Well, the title to go with our thoughts and how many sermons have been preached on this I wouldn't care to think. Never preached one myself, I think, at least not here at Christ Baptist Church. But the title to go with our thoughts is this, "When Doing Nothing Is Not an Option." David is the king in waiting, but he is occupied in quite lowly tasks. He knows where he is heading. He knows what the final destination for him is to be. Samuel's anointing of him has confirmed something, which we rather imagine was a growing realization in his own soul. That his, walk with God, a close walk. We figure, actually, a number of the Psalms really had their genesis during the time he was out in the fields as the shepherd boy looking after sheep and caring for the ewes with young from which place God took him from those sheep folds that he might be the shepherd of Israel.

But the time has not yet come for that. He is the king in waiting. The king in making. And he has been at the palace, but we think, actually, he spent, as we read here, time in the fields. But later on, it's a bit puzzling that Saul, when he sees this youth who has actually been playing the harp for him and soothing him when the distressing spirit comes upon him, and he doesn't seem to recognize him. He's grown. Grown in stature. Grown as a man. He's not quite the lad that first appeared in court. And it's puzzled Saul. He's wondering, "I don't really recognize him. Who is this figure that has now emerged and is so strong in doing such extraordinary things?"

So, David has been commuting in a way between the fields and the palace. Perhaps, spending well the more time back in the fields looking after the sheep. That's something, isn't it? Because there he is with these weighty promises that you're going to be the king one day. Now here in the fields. Well, that could have been difficult, couldn't it?

Impatience could have gripped there and wanting to make haste to enter into what he believed, and rightly believed, was the calling of God and which Samuel had confirmed by the anointing of him, not his three older brothers. They're named again here. They were named earlier when Samuel goes to Bethlehem to anoint him. There is Eliab. There is Abinadab. And there is Shammah. But no, this is a moment still that is awaiting its moment.

He will become king, but not just yet. But events are moving on. And Saul is declining. His power is waning. God is judging him for his failure to obey. And in that judgment, he has given Saul over to a distressing spirit that God himself has sent. And in that time, he gets taken over by dark thoughts, and violent thoughts, and he is out of control, launching spears at people. And something horrible is happening within his soul, which is as a confirmation of the darkness that is already there. So, Saul is declining. And David now, well, he's sent on a very kind of mundane errand, isn't he? Jesse, his father, hasn't said to him, "Well, go there to the battle line. I'm sure you are about to be seized by God and promoted forward. This could be your moment to emerge." No, he has given him some food to take to his brothers and also some food for the commander of that portion of the army. And that is much as it amounted to in Jesse's eyes. "Go there, and then come back with a report to me." Just running an errand for your dad. And there was not much more else thought about it. Whether David thought that this had more significance than simply running an errand it simply doesn't say. But it very quickly emerges that actually no, there is much more going on here, that this errand is destined to lead to this remarkable event which does very much for him bring to everybody's attention that this actually is a man that God is with. Just as Saul visibly must have been worrying to those close to him to see that his dark moods that come over him, his irrational violence that seizes him, and begin to think that he is not looking like a king so much. David, on the other hand, is beginning to look remarkably like a king. So, things are about to change very, very dramatically.

First heading is this. The arrogance of an unbelieving world. The arrogance of an unbelieving world. While we are, on one hand, in the area of battles, and fighting, and armor, and of javelins and swords, and bearers of shields, and such things as this, we're actually seeing something deeper in it, something very spiritual in it. Whereas, yes, this is going to be a very carnal battle, and David taking the fallen giant's sword and cutting off his head. Well, it doesn't get more kind of nuts and bolts, flesh and blood, carnal if you like, than that. But there is something going on here, isn't there? Goliath is standing out as something more than just himself. Just as Pharaoh in Egypt is standing out as something more than simply a rather stubborn objectionable leader. He stands for the world. He stands for its arrogance. He stands for its opposition to God's will and to God's people. And here is Goliath in that same kind of line of descent showing forth the same arrogance, the same dishonoring of God's name and his people.

Now, I mentioned earlier, he is one of the descendants of Anak. Anak. He was a giant among the Philistines, and when the people of God, having just been there, led by Moses, almost sort of hovering near the border of their promised land, and they sent spies, didn't they, to go in and study the land, survey the land. See what's happening. Bring back a

report. Though Joshua and Caleb or really the spirit of David and could see that the Lord can surely bring in us. But the other ten, while they conceded that it was a very good land and the fruitfulness of that land was remarkable, but they said this. I am just quoting Numbers 13:28 which is where they report back. Here they are, they say, “Nevertheless the people who dwell in the land are strong; the cities are fortified and very large; moreover,” this is it, “moreover we saw the descendants of Anak there.” Giants. These were giants. That was it! Well, it’s bad enough to say there are strong looking people, fortified cities, moreover this was the clinching thing, wasn’t it? There were these giants. These descendants, these sons of Anak. “Well, really, we felt before then just like grasshoppers in their sight and in our own sight.” And really, well, they said, didn’t they then, “Don’t try to go in. It’s not safe. The promised land. Not for today.” Joshua and Caleb dissented from that, and God supported Joshua and Caleb and judged those who had seen the giants and said, “Don’t enter.”

So, this is where Goliath comes from. He’s part of that tribe, if you like, that family. And here he is now just issuing this defiant challenge with such arrogance. And well, you can get a feel for him, can’t you? And had we read earlier in it that we would have seen it there. Just a flavor, isn’t it? When he sees David, sneers at him. This lad coming at him with a sling! He says, “Am I a dog that you are chasing me around with a stick or something?” And he then says in verse 44, said to him, “Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field!” No contest here he thought. This is a walkover. And you will be what you will be. I will be feeding you to the birds. Can’t see any other outcome.

Well, he is a type of the world. And the world has hostility and arrogance in its heart toward God and toward his people. So, we’re right to see here a clash of kingdoms. This is a clash of kingdoms that there is a battle line here, but it is more than simply these armies fighting against each other and this particular champion who issues his challenge, “Well, if you defeat me, we’ll be your servants, but if I defeat whoever you put up to fight against me, then you will be our servants.” There is a battle beyond that. And David recognized that, doesn’t he? That this is the Lord’s battle. This is something beyond simply Saul’s army trying to gain territory back of the Philistines and the Philistines wanting to gain territory of the Israelites. There was a bigger issue at stake here. And there was a clash of kingdoms. And he is right, wasn’t he? And maybe as we hear from the garden of Eden what the Lord Jesus in his coming will do, that he is going to bruise Satan’s head, although Satan’s going to bruise his heel. There is going to be pain for the Son of God. There is going to be a cross. But he is going to give a fatal blow to Satan.

And so, here is David. Well, he bruises the giant’s head, doesn’t he, with his sling, with his well-aimed stone. He had five stones, but he only needed one shot. Slap bang in the forehead, the man sank to the ground. That was the end of him. He wasn’t getting up from that. Well, he truly bruised his head. There’s something significant in that, isn’t there? This blow that was struck, just as Daniel foresaw that there would be this great kingdom, but a stone, not hewn, as it were, with human hands, a kingdom not of this earth would shatter it, bring it to nothing. Well, it is something of that that’s happening here. This is more than simply a battle or an exciting story. Ah, what Sunday School

child worth their salt hasn't heard this a fair few times! But actually, there is a deeper action going on here.

Well, things that are so superior. Well, things of this sort, powerful. He thinks that we are basically very foolish. Very, very foolish to believe the things we do and to live the kinds of lives that we do. You could find it in the Pharisees and the rulers, the chief priests. That in John 7:48 when our Lord was there at the Feast of Tabernacles had been preaching, and they had sent the temple guard to arrest him. These men had not been able to. They had actually been transfixed by his preaching. Not been able to get near him and come back, some of them perplexed and amazed. And these guards, well, they in a sneering way, the Pharisees there, the high priest and his entourage, "Have any of the rulers of the Pharisees believed in him? Have important people believed in this carpenter's son from Nazareth? You fools! What are you listening to him for? Big and important people don't listen to him." Try to make these men feel inferior, foolish, stupid for having listened to the Lord Jesus when he stood and cried out, "If any are thirsty, come to me and drink. Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."

Well, it didn't impress those men, rightly so, but the Pharisees sneered. And here is Goliath, and he is sneering. Now, the atheists sneer. There is Richard Dawkins. There in one of his upbeat moods described that atheists are the brights by which he meant they don't have light bulb moments like that, but that they're just a bit more there. They're just a bit cleverer, a bit smarter, a bit more able to put it together, and that therefore we are the dims. We are the not so brights. We are flat footed intellectually and really just out of the picture.

That arrogance, and here is Goliath in this episode here defying the armies of the living God. He does that in verse 36. We hear David echoing what this man is doing, what he is saying, and cursing David by his gods in verse 43. He thinks that he is on to something that David is not, not any of his colleagues there in the army, and certainly not Saul. David recognizes that enmity and that arrogance, and it provokes him, doesn't it? It provokes him. Where we are seeing for David doing nothing is not an option. That there is something so vital at stake here, something very important in this challenge, that it cannot go unanswered. And so, there is David offering himself for this battle.

Well, we have it, don't we? Many fronts at the moment are opened up. Creation, as well, isn't it? What are we to believe in creation? That is brutally sneered at and relegated from the school curriculum into sort of fairy tales, not science. We say, "No, no, no. No, no, no. This is science! This works actually on all levels. It's revelation. That begins and it ends it for us. That settles the deal. But actually, the science settles it too. As we smilingly say there, "If you follow the science, you will be a creationist, not a Darwinian." The science doesn't back up Darwin. If you follow him, there is precious little science that works. You're having to go against science to keep faith in Darwin. But yet, we are not the brights when it comes to this, apparently.

Sexual ethics. Well, there is a contested area. How many Goliaths there are at the moment sneering at the idea of keeping yourself chaste, and keeping sexual intimacy

until marriage. And that actually allowing yourself the freedom and you'll understand to indulge whatever desire you have, or whatever thought you have about your own sexual kind of assignment, who you are today. What kind of binary, nonbinary, or fluid person that you think you are at the moment. Make it all up. We say, "No, that doesn't work." And it doesn't actually work even on the terms that those who promise freedom think that it will. It doesn't offer freedom. It offers a lot of unhappiness and a lot of misery, a lot of unhappy people, depressed people, anxious people. People, whose lives didn't come together because they found sexual freedom, began to fall apart, and who walk with a limp through the rest of their lives.

Or salvation. When we talk about salvation, free grace, salvation full and free, God's gift to us in his Son, and we speak about it, preach about it. In the open air we tell people about it. Well, we love this. We love this! This is a message. This has done so much for us! The world thinks, "This is nothing. There is nothing there." What are we going on about? They can't see it, can't get it. They don't think it's worth getting either. They don't we're on to anything with this. That this doesn't affect anything or change us as people. They can just dismiss it.

Isn't sin so empty? Doesn't it just yield nothing? Is it not passing pleasure that eventually is emptiness? There is testimonies in the evangelical times of people who have reached their twenties, thirties, had it all. No, they didn't. Suddenly, they ran out of fuel. They are empty. A void within. How does that stir them then to begin to look deeper? And that's when they begin to see that in the Lord Jesus Christ, this salvation actually was going to fill their lives. That was what was missing, and so, they eagerly embraced him. The world knows nothing of it. Sneers at this idea of salvation. And we shake our heads and say, "You're missing it. You're missing so, so much." But there it is. The arrogance of the unbelieving world.

Now, we could do nothing about that. David, I guess, could have said, "Well, who can answer this? Nine feet tall! He's big!" And been like the spies who went into the land, "Moreover, we saw the descendants of Anak there. Giants! We can't deal with them! Just back off! Back off!" David didn't back off. And this is where he saw doing nothing is not an option. There is the arrogance, the unbelieving world, we could have, I'm going to come to my next heading in a moment, we could just melt away. That isn't an option actually. That is not an option.

So, my next heading then. The fear of the church. Not the people out there fearing the church, but the fear that is in here in the church, in the wider church, evangelical church, and certainly, within the liberal church. We notice, don't we, time and time again that the appearance of Goliath, this challenge, this confident defiance, was not met with them by faith, what David's going to meet it with. They're absolutely sinking. They're like the spies, the ten who came back. They're, "No, this is too big. We can't deal with this." Their hearts failed, we read there in verse 11, verse 24, verse 32.

What is then the reaction of Eliab, the older brother? That he is rather dismissive of David. He says, "What have you come here for? What are you doing here? Just wanted to

come and have a look, did you?" And he even impugns David's motives and makes it seem as if he just left the sheep behind so that he could come and watch the action, watch the battle and get a bit of a buzz from that. Well, what's Eliab on about here? Maybe there is a bit more going on, because he discerns that David is not afraid. David's reaction to what's going on shows that he is not afraid. Eliab is. He is the older brother. He impressed Samuel with his standing, and his appearance, and everything, that Samuel thought that surely this is the Lord's anointing! The Lord said, "No, I am not looking at the outward appearance. I am looking at the heart." Where is the heart of the man? There is fear. And he is not going to respond to the challenge of Goliath, and he is rather afraid that David might, and that he can't bear the jealousy that comes through in that he tries to put David down.

And yet for all the arrogance of the Philistines buoyed up by Goliath, as soon as Goliath is dead, they flee. In verse 51 they flee! And Israel is able to pursue them and absolutely inflict a lethal blow upon them. That was all there. It was all there available. And actually fear for months, the army, Saul's army, meant they were going to do nothing about it. That's what fear does, doesn't it? It paralyzes. It paralyzes. It prevents action from taking place. It makes doing nothing the only option, and rather than think perhaps that God could do something here, it makes the whole case seem quite beyond, quite beyond us. We can only see reasons why not rather than reasons why. It can only generate within itself these reasons why we shouldn't even attempt this. Reasons why we maybe we should attempt this. And that is fear.

How often the church, sadly, has been overawed by the godless, overawed by the unrighteous and what they say. "I suppose it's wisdom. I suppose it's science." And what they think gender is all about, or what they think that our biology is, where we came, where we are going. And under the weight of that supposed scholarship, and all of that supposed intelligence, and education, and all of these things, the confidence of the church collapses, just as the men in Saul's army, Eliab included, why, Saul included, they just can't think there is a way that we can combat this. It's too big! Too much going for them. And instead of meeting the challenge, it melts away, and the church capitulates.

It actually then begins to find reasons it thinks to be able to agree with the world and to think, "Well, actually, the Philistines aren't so bad after all. And Goliath and shake hands on this, and that we can come to an agreement here. I am sure we can live under the old rule, and that would be fine." Well, the church has done this. Removed then the Bible. Said, "We're not going to sit under the Bible. We'll sit under whatever pleases you, and then we'll see what bits of the Bible are left after you've had your say, and that will be fine. We'll live with that. That will be fine." And that's how the church has often tried to coexist with the world. And as the world has grown more aggressive, and gained in confidence, and had more intellectual fire power and clever philosophies to try to justify, well, the rate of change has grown. More and more sections sort of break away and want to try to talk terms of peace with Goliath and want to kind of come in with the Philistines, rather than face perhaps a battle, a little discomfiture, a little bit of a challenge, and that is sadly the path that many within the church over the centuries we have to say now, but certainly over the last decades at increasing rates have gone.

And within it, it suggests there is nothing that God can do here. That he has got nothing in his Word that can help us here. He hasn't got an answer that he can give. And rather look at his Word as supplying all that we need, you're not to believe that section. "Well, is that really history? Is it just poetry? Let's move that aside. Maybe the details are wrong here. Maybe there is something more that God hasn't shown us," and we rely upon extra revelation or something to kind of get us out of where Scripture is closing us into. "Well, that's uncomfortable. Let's look for a way out here."

Well, Paul had confidence, didn't he, in the Word of God. And that's a very strong statement he made in 2 Corinthians 10 which we read a moment ago. That tells us that he believes that this Word of God has a lot of power to deal with a lot of arrogant unbelief and to really, really shake it up. Demolish it in fact. That's what he is saying here, isn't it, in 2 Corinthians 10:4-6. That the elements in the church that are still not listening, they are still in immorality, and in envy, and in covetousness and idolatry, well, they better watch out. Because when he comes to them, he's going to be rather bold. And he is going to come with the Word of God. He says, "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal." In other words, are not coming with a sword, not going to chop off your head. They're not going to do as David did to Goliath. That was then. Now, we fight, yes, but our weaponry is the Word of God. We come with that Word. We preach that Word. We speak that Word. We bring good apologetics based upon that Word. So, "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled."

So, it's a kind of metaphorical dealing with Goliath in that way, but Goliath, what happens to him is now to be seen in what God's Word is going to accomplish, and that Paul believed that this Word will do great, great harm. Everything, every worldly thought, all of the ideas of the Corinthian orators, and their beliefs, and this is permissible, and that that is permissible, and the sexual license that was there. No, this is going to come at it with a wrecking ball. It's going to demolish it. It is going to, just as Goliath was pulled down and cast down, this great high thing that was exalting itself against the knowledge of God but wasn't.

So, that's what the Word of God can do. And we should be confident in that. We should believe that. That it actually hasn't changed. It is sufficient to meet all the challenges that the unbelieving world can throw up, all its high things, all its strongholds, its philosophies, what are things right. "This has got you this time. You won't be able to answer this!" And Paul is telling here, "Oh yes, it will. And we can follow him. Oh yes, it will." And there is David in a carnal sense, but doing the same things. "Oh yes, it will. I am coming against you in the name of the Lord, and that is sufficient. That is going to do it. These five stones will be more than enough to be able to win the battle."

So, fear in the church. While it's meant that we stop thinking that the Bible can help. Stop thinking biblically about the world that we are in. We begin to run for cover. We

certainly, huge sways of the church over the centuries have ditched supernaturalism. So, we don't believe in a supernatural God who does supernatural things. So, we have to remove all the miracles. We have to remove the virgin birth. Anything back in the Old Testament, passing a Red Sea, passing through the river Jordan, that all of these things have to go to accommodate to the natural mind. Defeat and running away in the face of the unbelieving world.

Now, we should believe more in supernaturalism, not less. We should believe more that all that is written here is God at work and that actually, while we may not quite see the Red Sea parting, but that supernatural God can still bring supernatural intervention and can bring great discomfiture to the great proponents of unbelief if he so chooses. And we have confidence in that. We believe that here are the answers to what man is about. This is giving us the insights we need into the human heart. This is telling us where man is hiding. What all this bravery, what all this boldness is really about. That the fear actually is there. Something in there. And that confidence, just as the Philistines, as soon as Goliath fell, they fled. It wasn't built on much. They didn't require in the end over much for it to topple and fall.

And so, the church has often been paralyzed with fear. Paper tiger if you will, been terrified by something that really has no philosophical, no intellectual basis, and which is there for the taking. And so, our third heading. David's faith in God. David's faith in God. Well, true enough, we notice that God has a purpose, a future, for him. And he didn't know when he set out on that errand that it would involve him having to fight a giant. He didn't know that that was the pathway to him actually coming into prominence, and being recognized, and it being seen that there is something exceptional about this young man, something about him that makes him stand out before the people. Didn't know any of that was coming his way. But it did.

Well, what happened with him? Whereas when he heard the Philistine, and everybody else's hearts melted, David's didn't. That's what got Eliab a little bit angry, that David's heart didn't melt. And he heard that challenge. He was provoked by it. It stirred him. He thought, "What is this? We are the people of God! And God has given us this land, and there are things that he is going to fulfill in this land, and through us is the Messiah to come. And are we going to live under this uncircumcised man's challenge? Is he going to stand there and scoff and mock those things which we know are real and are precious? Well, surely not," is his response.

He heard the words. We see that in verse 23. And he responded to those words with great confidence. He knew that God was actually in this. And we see that, for instance, there in verse 32 when he is brought to Saul. People have heard David saying, "What's going to be done for the man who kills Goliath?" And so, Saul hears about this. Brings him in. And David said to Saul, "Let no man's heart fail because of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine." David wasn't thinking of defeat in that. David was thinking of victory in that. He had faith that God would be with him.

And we see that conviction various places. It's there in verse 37. He is confident. David said, "The LORD, who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine." That's faith, isn't it, just there! Verse 45, 46, when here we are. The Philistine Goliath is on him cursing him by his gods and belittling him. David speaks with a very measured tone, doesn't he, back to him there. "You come to me with a sword, 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."

And then he goes on further. Verse 46. "This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you and take your head from you. And this day I will give the carcasses of the camp of the Philistines to the birds of the air and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel." Faith. Goliath rather thought that the birds were going to enjoy a little feast on this young lad. David had bigger ideas for the birds. They're going to be feasting, actually, on the whole Philistine army, because there is only one way that this was going to finish. Defeat for the Philistines. That's faith in God.

So, he is provoked by the unbelief that was around him and responded believing God would have this addressed. There was only going to be one winner in this battle, this clash of kingdoms, this coming against each other of ideas and philosophies. Only one winner in this. And that is going to be the Lord. And so, that conviction is there. Let's note a few things regarding it. That actually his preparation for this moment had been happening already. This was not a sudden surprise. This was not suddenly, "Oh, we have never seen this kind of David before." No, when he is talking with Saul and assuring Saul that he is well able to handle this situation and manage it, he refers back to the time he spent out in the fields looking after the sheep. Verse 34. "Your servant used to keep his father's sheep, and when a lion or a bear came and took a lamb out of the flock, I went out after it and struck it, and delivered the lamb from its mouth; and when it arose against me, I caught it by its beard, and struck and killed it. Your servant has killed both lion and bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, seeing he has defied the armies of the living God." The training out in the fields. Well, what's a sheep? You can suffer one loss. That lion looks a bit ferocious. I wouldn't go chasing that. Or that bear that had come with menace. But no, David responded to that challenge. He would not let one of the sheep go. He was looking after them all. Not one was going to be lost.

So, whether it be a lion or a bear, he was going to fight it. And he succeeded. And that taught him something. And he is bringing those victories, those battles that he has had to fight when nobody else was seeing. It was between him, as it were, and God, and his sense of responsibility to his father in a way. "This is his flock. I'm looking after it." There are battles that were won there now come to the fore in this public battle when it's a bigger situation, bigger stakes. Well, you've got the whole of the army of Israel. You've got the army of the Philistines. This is a big moment. That that private battle, the training that he has been undergoing already is standing him in good stead.

Next, he refused to be talked out of it by others. He got a lot of discouragement when his brother Eliab tried, and others were trying, well, Saul himself tried to dissuade him. Verse 33. “And Saul said to David, ‘You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for you are a youth, and he a man of war from his youth.’” “You’re not a fighter! He is! He’s been trained that way! He’s grown up that way. And there are you saying you’re going to go and fight him. Forget it.” Tried to dissuade David. He wouldn’t hear it though, would he? And then, when Goliath himself comes with all his words, David doesn’t say, “Let’s call this off. I don’t really fancy my flesh being given to the birds of the air. You are rather big. That javelin and everything else you got, that spear, it’s all a little bit threatening.” No, he refuses to be talked out of it by anybody. That he is convinced that actually he comes with God behind him and with him, that he is fighting against this opposition to the purposes of God with all the strength and the reserves of heaven. He comes with the Lord of hosts, the Lord who commands angels, who has the armies of heaven to work for him. And they’re with David as he comes.

So, he refused to be talked out of it. He also refused the wrong kind of help or incentive. Our politicians work this out. How do you make the electorate happy? Offer them tax breaks. Well, this is what Saul was offering, wasn’t it? Here was the incentive scheme that anybody who goes, and fights Goliath and wins, tax exemptions for him, his family for life. Well, that is an incentive there. Not that anybody much had risen to that challenge or saw it as sufficient for them to go and brave it with Goliath. But I am sure if David heard it, he didn’t hear it. That that was not the big thing. He might have thought of his father in his old age, and Saul was becoming rather burdensome with his taxation. That could be nice. Help him out that way. Promise of the hand of Saul’s daughter in marriage. I don’t think any of that made any difference whatsoever to him. Incentive scheme was really quite irrelevant. Didn’t need to be said. This was not what it was about. But this was the Lord’s honor that was at stake in this.

And he also refuses Saul’s armor. Again, we could have read that and how he tries Saul’s armor on, but he hadn’t worn it before. It was untested, and he was not able to think for himself fighting with that. He used the means that God would show. And even though it might seem promising to have some armor. After all, Goliath has got armor. Might need some to fight against him. But no, this was not, it wasn’t right.

On the other hand, next, he does use means. There is a battle to be fought. It is the Lord’s battle. We could say, “That’s fine. We can just stay at home. The Lord will fight the battle. What more to be said?” And sometimes, people do, don’t they? They hide behind the doctrine of the sovereignty of God and say, “Well, there it is. God will do it. We can just relax and not have to really get too involved in this, roll up our sleeves, take any risks. Risk being thought unloving, bigoted, whatever the choice terms are that roll around people’s tongues these days. But we just don’t have to do anything.” Not so. God’s people do have to. We’re going to contend for the faith. We’re going to contend for the faith! It’s like a military term. It’s not just going to happen while we stay at home, as if we can sound very pious and say, “Well, the sovereignty of God will deal with this.”

Carey, a great missionary, apparently had something of this. A bit of a put down when he had that great desire to go and take the gospel out to the heathen. And the desire there, and it eventually matured into a calling to go to India. And arguably, something there that happened within his own experience, which was a bit of a putdown. "Man sit down. God is going to save the heathen. He'll do it without your help or mine. That we leave it to him. Just don't you put yourself forward to do this. God doesn't work like that." But Carey knew better. And he had something of the spirit of David about him. He was provoked by the fact that there were countless millions of people, heathen, who were perishing without Christ, a map with all the countries, and heathen. They're pagan nations. They're dying. And that stirred him to action.

Time for prayer passes. Time to act comes. And David is not going to be found wanting. But he will use means. He's not just going to think, "Well, it will just happen. I just need to stand there. Goliath falls." No, there is five stones, isn't it, in his pouch, and that sling. That realizes, sure the Lord showed him, "That is the means that you are to use. Forget the swords. Forget Saul's armor. That's going to win the victory." What looked most unlikely, I mean Goliath laughed it to scorn. "What is this going to do? Am I dog that you come against me with sticks? Well, I will teach you a lesson young man." And fully confident that he was going to win the battle. How wrong he was.

And David how wise he was with the means that he chose. But he had to put himself at risk, didn't he? And he had to put himself in danger. And he had to court that danger, be willing to be in danger. His reputation, whatever else, his life, here and it's on the line. And we are glad to say, aren't we, still, in our own culture, not in every culture, there are people there stand up for the Lord. Your life is on the line. Well, maybe our careers, yeah. Maybe our job prospects. Hmm. Maybe other things too. Our friendship circle might shrink a bit when people know who we are and what we believe. Yes, but we want to stand up for him, don't we? We want to stand up for the Lord. The provocations and unbelieving people, we want them to know what we believe when we believe these things, well, the Bible actually has the answers not only that we need, but everybody needs. And that we will have the conviction to say that. We'll contend for the faith. In fact, we'll contend for it earnestly, because it was once delivered to the saints. This is the book. And if it upsets people. It's going to have to upset them. And if they come at us with whatever philosophical spears, or whatever kind of implications that they might choose, well, we will weather that and look to God to sustain us, because the battle is the Lord's.

And finally, I ask, how many Goliaths are still out there who have survived because the church over the last decades, years, maybe centuries we would be able to say now, never thought that it perhaps should fight these causes. Never thought that it should answer these objections. And that it had the means to do it with the Word of God. And that God would be with them in it. And that his Spirit would be upon them as the Spirit was upon David. How many Goliaths survived? They're still there. Still threatening. Have been allowed to get even stronger, because nobody came out to challenge them. And they thought, "Well, this is easy. We just have to say this, and they melt away."

And how many, therefore, ideas, thoughts that have been distinctly unhelpful and have eroded confidence in God and his Word have been allowed to get themselves more embedded in our culture, because the church, in broadest terms, the church, decades passed, did not rise to the occasion. It actually saw doing nothing as the option rather than not seeing that doing nothing that actually simply was not an option here. And it needed a challenge to be met. It required the use of God's Word is truth to counter these things that were being said. How many unclaimed victories are there that simply nobody rose up to challenge? How often did fear keep people rooted to the spot and allowed, perhaps allowed ourselves, to accommodate ourselves to failure, to defeat, to nothing will ever happen again. That somehow the spirit of God has gone, and there is nothing more for us to say or to do.

Well, David was not of that school of thought, was he? And that provocation, why, he was walking with the Lord, and he knew, "This needs to be answered. I will answer it, because God is in this. He is with me. This is an epic contest. This is a clash of kingdoms. And it's a crucial moment. I need to respond." And he rose to the moment. And sure enough, God was with him. And all that followed, including that chopping off of his head, God was with him.

And so, perhaps for us too, as we look at the culture that we are in, doing nothing is not an option. And although I wouldn't recommend that you buy a sling, get down to the river and find yourself five smooth stones. I don't think that will work for this. But there are sure plenty of other means. I think they are here in the Word of God available for us. That perhaps somewhere, sometime, we might have our moments where God looks to us to rise up, to say something to that Goliath, that he may be with us, and that a wonderful victory might transpire.

# WHEN DOING NOTHING IS NOT AN OPTION

## (Sermon Summary)

### Reading: 1 Samuel 17.

David is now the king-in-waiting. Although he has spent time with King Saul, David has now returned to the fields. The Lord is still secretly preparing His servant in obscurity for great office. Saul's power is now waning, and he is now being judged by the Lord who has sent a distressing spirit upon him. David is sent by his father on an errand that proves to be a defining moment in David's ascent to the throne. This battle with Goliath is what brings David to the attention of the people, including Saul, and is the proof that he is the Lord's anointed.

#### 1. The arrogance of the unbelieving world.

Goliath is one of the giants descended from the sons of Anak (Numbers 13:28). He is full of arrogance, as we see from his behaviour and the way that he challenges and insults the Lord's people (v44). In this respect he is like a type of the world, under the sway of the evil one. It is a clash of kingdoms. Just as our Lord Jesus is destined to bruise Satan's head, so David here is destined to bruise Goliath's head with his well aimed sling shot to the forehead of the giant.

The world shares Goliath's sense of superiority over the things of God. It feels itself to be smart and powerful. The sneering Jewish rulers later said contemptuously of the Lord Jesus, 'Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed in Him?' (John 7:48). Godless people think they are so wise. Atheists have called themselves 'The Brights' because they think they are smarter than believers.

We see Goliath arrogantly defying the armies of the living God (v36). He curses David by his gods (v43). David saw that this was a spiritual battle and had a greater significance than simply a battle with the champion of the Philistine nation. It was the Lord's battle (v47).

Today the world still challenges and ridicules aspects of the Christian faith such as creationism, or the sexual ethics that we believe in, or the need of salvation. In response to this, we could opt to do nothing and not rise to the challenge, choosing to ignore or even dismiss the objections that are being raised by the world at large. This would not seem to be a good option.

## **2. The fear of the church.**

In the face of the challenge, and the sense of superiority and confidence that Goliath communicates, the soldiers in Saul's army are afraid (vv 11, 24, & 32). Fear probably lies behind Eliab's unkind comments about David (v28). He recognizes that David is unafraid and it exposes the fear in himself. Yet how quickly the confidence of the Philistines is destined to collapse, the moment that David fells their champion (v51).

But the fear among the Lord's people in Saul's army paralyzes them so that they do nothing. Goliath's challenge to them seems unanswerable. At times the church seems to be overawed at the confident arguments put forward by the world and the things that it says against the church and against the Lord. There is, apparently, no confidence in the word of God as having anything to say. Paul believes that it has great power and sufficiency to do great damage to every argument against the truth (2 Corinthians 10:4-6). We should have more confidence in the word of God to stimulate us and help us to think.

Yet, over the years, the church has abandoned its belief in supernaturalism and so has dropped any belief in creation, or the parting of the Red Sea, the collapse of the walls of Jericho and the miracles of the New Testament. Rather we should expect to see supernatural interventions as we challenge the world and its way of thinking. We should believe that the Bible is able to answer the world and we should begin with the Bible's understanding of the nature of man as we look at the attitudes and words of the world. We should not be intimidated by what the world says.

Sadly, fear means that the church retreats and loses confidence in the word of God and in God Himself. We refuse to attempt to do anything in His name, and refuse to believe that the Lord might be with us and might help us.

## **3. David's faith in God.**

David has faith in God and this leads him to take action and not do nothing. He has been challenged and provoked by Goliath and knows that there is a work to be done in the Lord's name. When he hears the giant's words (v23), he responds with confidence (v32). He has a conviction that the Lord will be with him (vv37, 45 & 46). He is ready to respond and there is not a hint of defeatism about him. He does not regard the cause as lost before he has even begun.

We see in this that what he has experienced in private has prepared him for this very big and public calling (vv34-37). He has shown courage there in a private setting and this is now part of who he is when he steps forward for this bigger work. Choices we make in private and things that we do count. David was able to see that the Lord had been with

him in those more secret actions and was therefore confident that He would be with him in this new situation.

We also see that he refused to be talked out of this action by the negativity of others. He refuses to hear what Eliab has to say by way of a put down (v28). He does not listen to Saul either (v33). In the end, neither does he pay any attention to the intimidating words of Goliath himself (v43).

David also refuses wrong kinds of help or incentives. It is not the promised tax exemptions that spur him on (v25). Neither does he trust himself with Saul's armour (v38-39). He will do what he is to do from the right motives and with the right means.

But David does still use means (v40). His is not the sort of piety that refuses to do anything but 'waits on the Lord.' This can be an excuse to do nothing. The time for prayer has passed and the time for action has now come. We should never use God's sovereignty as an excuse to do nothing. And there are times when what we do might seem very risky and upset people. We are sometimes to contend for the faith.

We might ask how many 'Goliaths' there are still at large who have been allowed to go on unchallenged? How many have been allowed to continue because 'do nothing' was the option we chose? How often has fear kept us rooted to the spot? How many victories might we have won? How many advantages have been allowed to the Lord's enemies? We can become so accustomed to failure that we fail to look out for the opportunities to do exploits for God.