

Let Courage Rise with Danger

by Rev. Tom Aicken

In the covenant community of the church nearly all, both young and old alike, are familiar with the biblical account of David and Goliath in 1 Samuel 17. Oh, but how was it that David mustered up the courage to confront and fight the mighty Goliath, that giant of a man and champion of the Philistines? As a shepherd defending the sheep David had killed wild animals before, both lions and bears, and during this same time he had undoubtedly acquired some skill in the use of a slingshot, yet in size, weight and strength he was no match to the man now standing before him. Moreover, David had no training or experience in military combat whereas Goliath had been a fierce and able warrior from his youth. So, again, what was David's confidence in fighting him?

David gives us the answer to that question in v. 47 where he tells us that the battle is the Lord's. But what does that mean, "the battle is the Lord's"? David knew that it did not mean that he could just stand to one side and watch what the Lord was about to do. No, he understood and accepted the fact that he himself would have a vital role to play in that conflict. At the same time, however, he believed that the Lord can use even the least, most inadequate means to achieve the greatest, most impressive results. This is what David meant when he said that the battle is the Lord's, and this is why he did not run away but committed himself to be that means which the Lord might use to achieve the desired conquest.

Let us now move this up to our own day. The Bible says that every believer is to be ready always to give a quiet and reverent answer to everyone who asks a reason for the hope that is in him (1 Pet. 3:15). It is to be a quiet answer out of respect for the person we are talking to, and it is to be a reverent answer out of respect for the Lord God Himself, whom we represent and seek to serve. Too many Christians, though, find this a frightening task and shy right away from it. They react immediately, "Oh, no, how will I ever be able to share my faith in Christ with an unbeliever? I do not know enough. I am too timid. What if he asks me questions I cannot answer?" David faced a giant in his day; in the work of faithful and effective evangelism we may fear that the giant before us is equally daunting. So, what confidence can we have to tell others about the Lord Jesus Christ?

It should not surprise us to learn that it is the same confidence which David had, the confidence that the battle is the Lord's. We, too, have a vital role to play, dear Christian, in the task before us. Nevertheless, the message of the cross of Christ is itself the power of God; it is what He uses to save those whom He has ordained to eternal life (Rom 10: 17; 1 Cor. 1:18-24). Let us therefore commit ourselves to be the means that God is pleased to use. We may not always get the results we are looking for, such as the immediate conversion of that poor, lost soul we are talking to, and perhaps he will continue to resist the gospel all his life – that may very well be so – but never think that telling someone (including that unbeliever) about Christ and Him crucified is not a great victory in itself, because it is! And never think that such a testimony will not be remembered and celebrated in heaven to God's everlasting praise, because it will be (Rev. 14:13)! Do you really think, believer, that God is going to forget your standing up and speaking out on His behalf, or that He will simply dismiss such an unfruitful attempt of your loving zeal? He will not forget it, nor will He dismiss it (Ps. 139:1-4; Mal. 3:16-18).

Take courage, dear Christian, take courage. That is the message of God to His people. The battle is not ours, but the Lord's. Yes, we have a very active role in telling others of Christ, yet as someone once said, "The Lord's work, done the Lord's way, with the Lord's help, brings the Lord's blessing." Let me ask you, "If you know the Lord yourself, how did you come to do so?" I will tell you how: At some time in your life, believer, someone, somehow, shared with you the gospel message, called you to faith in Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, writing that on your heart, made you willing and eager to receive Christ in a day of His power!

James 5:19 & 20, "Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins." It is amazing what the Lord our God can do, and it is equally amazing what utterly inadequate means, like us, He is pleased to use in order to achieve it!

(The title for this article is taken from George Webb's encouraging hymn, *Stand up, Stand up, for Jesus*, written in 1837. "Stand up, stand up for Jesus, the trumpet call obey; Forth to the mighty conflict in this His glorious day. Ye that are men, now serve Him against unnumbered foes; Let courage rise with danger, and strength to strength oppose.")

