

Bethel

Pulpit

David and Goliath

Sermon Number 461

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day evening, 7th January, 2018**

Text: *“David said moreover, The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the Lord be with thee” (1 Samuel 17. 37).*

Sometimes we wake up in the morning. We have not the slightest idea what may take place during the day. I am sure all of you have had that experience. Sometimes you have woken up happily – everything seems to be going right – and then there is some news, or there is a tragedy, or there is a bereavement, or there is an affliction. Then sometimes it is completely the other way round. You perhaps wake up. You think the day is going to go on as every other day, and you get a phone call, or a letter, or an invitation, perhaps a very pleasant one, and your life is never the same again.

Now beloved friends, that is exactly what it was with David here. He was a boy looking after his father's sheep, and in the morning when he woke up, his father told him that instead of looking after the sheep, he had to go on an errand, go to the battlefield, where Israel were fighting the Philistines. He had to take a present to his three brothers and see how they were getting on, and bring news back again. Really, David set out that morning doing a little boy's job. Before the end of the day, he was the greatest man in Israel! We often quote that word: “My times are in Thy hand.”

“All must come, and last, and end,
As shall please my heavenly Friend.”

But we do not always think of it in this sense. One of our hymns speaks about a “turn of providence,” and sometimes in our little lives there is a turn of providence, and your life is changed for better or for worse, for sadness or for happiness.

One thing is clear: as David set out that day, he was not a stranger to the knowledge of the Lord. He could testify of what the Lord had done

for him, how he had prayed to the Lord and the Lord had answered him, what the Lord meant to him. So in a sense this chapter speaks especially to our young people and our children here. I wonder how many of you in your hearts really know the Lord, how many of you could say, perhaps tremblingly, something the Lord has done or what the Lord means to you. How many of you are seeking the Lord in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving? How many of you are letting your requests be made known unto God? I do hope that we have a praying congregation here.

But then young David had a burden and exercise in his heart, and that was the honour and glory of God. It is said of Whitefield, whose preaching was perhaps more blessed in this country than any man's before or since, that he just had that burning desire for the honour and glory of God. It was not so much himself, or his wonderful preaching, or the effect of it. It was the honour and glory of God. Now it is not always that in our burdens and exercises and concerns, but may it be so. "That God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ."

Now the way it affected David was this, and it is a good mark of grace. When he heard about Goliath, when he actually saw him, when he heard his blasphemies against the God of Israel, his heart was deeply touched. Do any of you know anything like that? You read in the papers, or you hear people dishonouring the Lord. Does it touch your heart? Do you know what that word means: "Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?" You cannot bear to have it dishonoured, which means you have a little love in you heart towards it.

But David was constrained by love. He was constrained to risk his life. Now you young ones, let us be clear: Goliath was a real giant, not an imaginary giant, or a fairytale giant. He was a real giant, and David was risking his life. It seemed a foolish thing naturally. It seemed an impossibility. But he had this one thing: he had the answer of a good conscience, and he had the Lord with him. But do not forget this also. You and I know the end of the story. David, when he went into battle, did not.

But there is one other thing, and that is, David was badly misunderstood by his brethren, and really it was this: they did not take him seriously. Sometimes that can be a harder trial for a young person who is deeply concerned in spiritual things than open opposition, when those who

should know better do not really listen to you, do not really take you seriously, even seem to take it for granted that you do not know anything about spiritual things, when it is the chief burden of your heart.

It has been said that David had two victories in this chapter, and one was greater than the other, and his greatest victory was over his own spirit. He was spoken to so dreadfully, so unkindly by his brothers, and he answered so quietly and so graciously: “What have I now done? Is there not a cause?” That does not just mean is there not a reason for what I have done, but is there not a cause? O beloved friends, if our religion is real, there is a cause, the cause of God and truth, and if our religion is real, it is that cause which comes close to our heart. May we be able to answer like this if people misunderstand or if they condemn: “What have I now done? Is there not a cause?”

You can imagine Saul being so concerned, and yet it was kindness to clothe David in Saul’s own armour, but David said, “I cannot go with these; for I have not proved them.” I think some of us know something of the spirit of that. We cannot go in Saul’s armour. It must be trusting in a greater than Saul. But David, constrained by love, for the honour and glory of God, for the good of Israel, going forth to fight against this evil giant, because he was not only a great giant, but his attitude to God and His people was a disgraceful attitude. But David could bear a good testimony. He was not foolhardy. He was not acting in a foolish way. Saul said, “Thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth.” David knew how to answer. David said, “Thy servant kept his father’s sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: and I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God.” Now that is living faith. It did not matter whether it was a lion or a bear or a giant, because David was not looking to any of them. He was looking up, and his eye was on his God. He knew his God was greater than the lion and the bear, and greater than this Goliath who was now defying him.

“David said moreover, The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine.” So really, beloved friends, this is the theme this evening, and it is the theme for the closing of the first Lord’s day of the new

year. Now David had been taught some good divinity, and he did not just learn it from Jesse, or his godly mother, though it is clear from one of the Psalms that his mother was a godly woman (Psalm 86. 16). He learned this from the Lord. It is this: *what the Lord has been in the past, He is still the same today, and He will be tomorrow*. What the Lord was able to do for us then, He is still able to do for us now. He is still faithful. He is still unchanging. He is still almighty. It is, “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.” It is,

“He who has helped me hitherto
Will help me all my journey through.”

So like David, we can look back and remember that spot, that place, how the Lord did not leave us, how He helped us, how He delivered us. Our case today or our case tomorrow, or during this coming year – the great point of this is not just a well-known story for children. It is full of godly divinity. David’s God is our God. He is still the same now as He was then. He says, “I am the Lord, I change not.” You change, I change, we all change, often not for the better; often for the worse. “I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.” We deserve to be consumed. If God had been a changeable God, David would have been consumed by Goliath. But he had a faithful and unchanging God. That is a good foundation for this year, as we venture forward with our hopes and fears, and our prayers and our concerns:

“A faithful and unchanging God,
Lays the foundation of my hope,
In oaths, and promises, and blood.”

“The Lord that delivered me ... He will deliver me.” Now that is good divinity. It is not based on a false foundation, a sandy foundation.

Well, beloved friends, I am sure many of you have giants that you will have to face this year. What do I mean by giants? Things that are too hard for you; things you are afraid of; things that trouble you; things that threaten you; things that you fear are going to overthrow you – giants. Some of you may have them in your family – difficulties and troubles. Some may have them in your afflictions, others in the afflictions of those you love. There are spiritual giants. The last great giant, “the last enemy” to “be destroyed is death.” Now,

“Who, except Jesus smiles within,
Can look that monster in the face?”

Can you? What about your sins, your soul, and a never-ending eternity? Has that ever come against you like a giant? “How shall I stand the trying day?” We could try to speak of all these giants and we may miss yours out. You know if you have things looming up before you. Goliath literally loomed up before David. It must have been a solemn shock when he appeared, someone about the height of this door, with all his noise and all his weapons. You have things that loom up before you, and perhaps with some of you, things will loom up suddenly, unexpectedly before you. How can you face them? How can you stand before them?

If you want one word for this chapter, it is *deliverance* – how David was delivered, how Israel was delivered! I have often said, the Word of God is a Book of trials and deliverances, and the experience of God’s people is an experience of trials and deliverances. You will not have one more trial than you have deliverances. You will not have one more giant than you have deliverances.

What was the first prayer in the Bible for deliverance? I think it was that of old Jacob when he heard his brother Esau was coming to meet him with four hundred armed men. Esau there appeared like a giant. Didn’t Jacob cry, “Deliver me, I pray Thee, from the hand of my brother ... for I fear him”? It was honest language. “I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies,” but, “Deliver me, I pray Thee.”

There is so much in the Book of Psalms about deliverance. It is no wonder, seeing David wrote most of the Psalms. “Call upon Me in the day of trouble” – when you have these things coming against you. “Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me.” But there are so many things, but above all it is the great, the vital concern. O if any of us could go home tonight singing,

“Thy love was great, Thy mercy free,
Which from the pit delivered me.”

That was the great deliverance at Calvary, when that word was spoken from heaven: “Deliver him from going down to the pit.” Why? “I have found a ransom.” And that ransom the Lord Jesus paid in His precious, sin-atoning blood, it delivered the whole of His people from going down to the pit, and

that is the only way you and I can ever be delivered from going down to the pit, if the eternal Father can look on His beloved Son, and if you and I can look on His beloved Son, and hear that voice: “Deliver him.... I have found a ransom.”

“The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine.” So there is a looking back here, and there is a looking forward. That is where we are this first Lord’s day in January. We are looking back, looking back over the past year, and looking back over many years of our lives, some more, some less; some longer, some shorter. But can’t you look back to your spots and places, and say, The Lord delivered me there? He did not leave me to sink. You remember that deep sorrow; you remember that bereavement; you remember that disappointment; you remember when you were ready to sink; you remember when you could not go on; and you say, But the Lord delivered me.

Of course, with some of you, when you were brought to realise your great need of salvation, it was an almighty Deliverer you needed, and you found Him in the Person of the Lord Jesus, and though it may be fearfully, you can say tonight, I believe He came, and in answer to my poor prayers, He delivered me.

“The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear” – in days past, in that trying hour, even when I was young. The point is, He is the same today. He is still the almighty Deliverer. He has not changed. He did not fail me then; He will not fail me now. Whatever there is in this new year is wisely hidden from us, but there will be a few giants appearing here and there in our lives. But,

“To keep our eyes on Jesus fixed,
And there our hope to stay.”

He is still an almighty Deliverer. He is still almighty to save. He is still unchanged, unchanging. He is still faithful.

“The Lord that delivered me ... He will deliver me.” Now we have this theme occurring over and over again in Scripture. You will not be surprised that David comes back to it once or twice. One is this: “Thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.” Don’t you have to pray that sometimes? Lord, I cannot deny it. “Thou hast

been my help,” but I need Thee now. “Leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.” That is David. Now this is David again: “The Lord hath been mindful of us: He will bless us.” That is looking back: “The Lord hath been mindful of us.” Well, He has. “He will bless us.” It is, “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day.” It does not say, “and tomorrow,” as you would expect. It says, “And for ever.”

“The Lord that delivered me ... He will deliver me.” And then in the New Testament Paul takes it up. Can you remember? He had some terrible trouble, and he writes to the church at Corinth. He does not say exactly what it was, but he emphasises the greatness of it. But then he says this: “Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us.” It is not a trust ill-grounded. So that is looking back and it is looking forward. “Who delivered us ... and doth deliver ... *He will yet deliver us*” – the certainty of it!

“The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine.” Whatever Saul thought, and whatever Eliab thought, and whatever the Israelites thought, God was faithful, and David was right, and he was delivered. That is a lovely word: the Lord *commands* deliverance. He commands it for His people. So there is a looking back here, and there is a looking forward here. May many of you this evening be able to look back over the last year, over your little lives, and may you be able to look forward, whether it is in hope or in fear, but may you look forward in dependence.

This looking back; this looking forward. But there is something else here, and it is more important than either of those, and that is that *David looked up*. Listen to his language as the actual moment of trial now arrived. That is it: when the actual moment of trial arrived. “Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield” – everything that the world could give; everything that a mighty man could need. Now David was looking up, and he had something better: “But I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts.” That is the mighty God. Hosts of angels obey Him; hosts of devils obey Him; hosts of circumstances obey Him.

David knew where to look in the time of need. Do you and I know where to look in the time of need? Is it “looking unto Jesus,” in hope?

David looked in hope. In complete dependence? David looked in complete dependence. O what weak and feeble means the Lord uses – a stone out of a sling – but God was in it, and it was He who directed that stone. It did not miss the mark. But it is that looking back – looking back tonight, looking forward tonight – but being sweetly enabled to look up. What will you see as you look up?

“Sweet to look upward to the place
Where Jesus pleads above.”

There is a sweetness in looking up, in looking away from Goliath, and giants, and circumstances, and sins, and fears, and looking only unto Jesus.

“Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield.” David had something better: “But I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand.” Never forget, we read these Old Testament accounts. Our circumstances are so different, and yet essentially our needs are still the same, but blessed be God, He is still the same, the same to all eternity.

“The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine.” In a word it is this:

“His love in time past forbids me to think
He’ll leave me at last in trouble to sink;
Each sweet Ebenezer I have in review
Confirms His good pleasure to help me quite through.”

There is another little word at the end, and it is a good one: “And Saul said unto David, Go, and the Lord be with thee.” I know that Saul was an ungodly man, but here he spoke as Israel’s anointed king, with royal authority, and may it be a confirming word to one of you here and another one here this evening. “Go, and the Lord be with thee.”