

Moral Bravery

by David Curry

Probably one of the greatest acts of bravery in the entire Old Testament is recorded in 1 Samuel 17, the story of David and Goliath. As the story unveils, Saul and the men of Israel are drawn up in battle array against the Philistines in the Valley of Elah. The Israelites are on one mountain top, and the Philistines on another with the valley in between. The champion of the Philistines, Goliath, has come forward making the request for the men of Israel to choose a man from among themselves to do battle with him. Goliath bargains that whoever loses the battle should serve the winner. The scriptures say, *“when Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid”* (17:11).

For forty days and nights Goliath utters his threats, and the men of Israel when they heard his voice, *“fled from him and were dreadfully afraid”* (17:24).

Enter David, youngest of the sons of Jesse’s household. Upon hearing Goliath’s threats, David asks *“who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?”* (17:26). He then without hesitation volunteers to do battle with Goliath, in full confidence that the Lord will deliver him.

As the story comes to its climax, David stands face to face with the giant, ready to do battle. There stands the giant Goliath, a *“man of war from his youth”* (17:33); Dressed in his battle garb he was intimidating to say the least. On the other hand, there is the shepherd boy, armed with only his staff, his sling, and his confidence in God. As quickly as it begins, it’s over. David draws one stone from his bag and slings it deep into the forehead of Goliath, killing him instantly.

The Philistine failed to recognize the great arsenal that David had from the Lord. It seems that many times we Christians fail to recognize the same thing. Read Romans 8:31: *“If God is for us, who can be against us?”* We have the very same assurances as did the young David.

There are several acts of bravery recorded throughout the New Testament. In Matthew 23, Jesus publicly rebuked the scribes and the Pharisees for their hypocritical lives and acts of worship, referring to them as *“blind guides”* (v. 16) *“fools and blind”* (v. 17); and *“serpents, brood of vipers”* (v. 33). It took great courage for Jesus to engage in such rebukes.

In the book of Acts, we read the stories about Peter and John who, after having been told not to teach in the name of Jesus Christ, said *“we ought to obey God rather than men”* (Acts 5:29). Steven, in the face of strong opposition, preached to the council, eventually losing his life for so doing (Acts 7:58-60). James, the brother of John, lost his life at the command of King Herod, for no apparent reason other than he was a Christian (Acts 12:1-2). The men of the early New Testament church were confident about their relationship to God.

Please don’t misunderstand. I’m not suggesting that we all go out and get ourselves killed just for the sake of showing our bravery. But, there are acts of moral bravery that we can take a part in almost daily. We can expose inconsistency like Paul had to as recorded in Galatians 2:11-15. Remember on this occasion how Paul asked Peter, *“If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of the Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?”* (v. 14).

We can uncover false teachers, (2 Peter 2:1-22). Peter devotes an entire chapter to the subject of false teachers, describing them, warning of their danger, and describing the Lord’s destruction of them. It then becomes our duty to expose false teachers and put them out from our midst.

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