

Title: The LORD is a man of war.
Text: 2 Samuel 5.17-25
Theme: The LORD fights for his people
Series: 2 Samuel
Prop Stmt: Being on the wrong side of God is the wrong side of history and everything else that matters.

The title of the message may sound a bit sensational, but it is not meant to be that. The title was taken directly from Exodus 15.3 following the decimation of Pharaoh's army in the Red Sea. The LORD said to Moses in the previous chapter to not fear, stand firm and see the salvation of the LORD. Then God said this, "The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent." And did he ever!

Read text:

After the coronation, Lucy runs to the edge of the balcony where Aslan is walking on the beach, away. Tumnus joins her as they realize that he is leaving. This is when Tumnus says, "He is not a tame lion." And Lucy responds, "but he is good."

The goodness of God "*means that God is the final standard of good, and that all that God is and does is worthy of approval.*" (Wayne Grudem p. 197) Every good and perfect gift comes from God because he is good. Everything that God made was good because it came from God. Being good does not mean that God is a pushover. He is not a tame lion. As the final standard of good, he is intensely protective of what is good and right. Just as meekness is not weakness, being a good God does not cancel out his wrath. In fact, it underscores it. His wrath is a righteous wrath. If his wrath was not righteous, then it would not be good. But it is good because it is righteous.

God is not domesticated and this text is not domesticated. In this account, God is the chief warrior and the ultimate victor. The story concludes with the enemies of God and their idols laying lifeless and powerless on the battlefield while the people of God celebrate his victory by praising him and naming the site in his honor. Our God fights for us.

1. **When the people of God come together, the enemies of God declare war.** (17-18)

Seven years has passed since the Philistines defeated Saul on the slopes of Mt. Gilboa. The Philistine victory was so complete, that the servants and residents of Saul's palace in Mahanaim ran for their lives and they were on the east side of the Jordan. They feared that the Philistines would come for them. In their mind, there was nothing to stop the Philistines from taking over the entire country or at least splitting it into two and then exercising complete dominion over the region. What happened? We know that from the end of 1 Samuel, that the Israelites abandoned many of their cities in the northern region and that the Philistines came and lived in them. But, that's it. Having control over much of that area, it is likely that the Philistines heavily taxed the Israelites and took a great deal of their crops and livestock which would keep them

impoverished and unable to mount a successful rebellion. But, why didn't the Philistines press their advantage? Who knows? Maybe internal issues and squabbles prevented them from getting their act together for a while. Maybe they were content with how things were. For whatever reason, the fact that the Philistines did not take greater advantage of their victory is quite a mystery, but certainly a kind providence of God because Israel was in no shape to defend herself and obviously the Philistines were not too concerned. Until... Until David was crowned king of the entire nation and was able to bring the nation together. Now, the Philistines freak out.

They freak out because they are threatened by the king. It could be that they thought they could control David, or that David was going to be loyal to them, but the story behind the story is clear. The kingdoms of this world are in conflict with the kingdom of God. In the OT, the kingdom of God was intended to be displayed through the kingdom of Israel. The people of Israel were intended to be the people of God. Clearly, they did a poor job overall. But, in those times when they actually did what they were supposed to do, it caused a panic to the powers that be. The kingdoms of this world are on a collision course with the kingdom of God. David threatened the Philistines. This was a preview of how Jesus would be and in fact was a threat to everyone who tried to build a kingdom apart from God. Look at what happened to Christ. The Romans crucified him. The religious leaders hated him. He exposed them for what they were. They were hypocrites. The foundation for their lives was nothing. People are not neutral about God. They love him or hate him and reject him. It is the coronation of David that triggers their military machine.

I've mentioned this before, but ancient military battles were viewed in two dimensions. There was the battle between the armies that only represented a greater battle between the gods. Whoever won either had the greater god, or it was possible that they lost because their god was ticked off at them. Now, there is some truth to that with Israel. They served the one and only living God. All other gods were imposters. Over and over God used Israel to expose that. Little Israel, confounded the nations and time and time again was victorious when she put her faith in God in ways that defied explanation. The Philistines knew some of the stories and yet, they did not want to believe it. The text makes it clear that the Philistine army brought their gods with them. They trusted in their idols, but when David unifies the kingdom, they attack because there is something about David that threatens their gods. We know what that is. David's trust in God will expose the fallacy of their faith. People who are wrong and stubborn freak out when their wrong beliefs are exposed. They resort to violence because they have no other weapon. Their hope is an illusion.

They freak out because the kingdom of God cannot be stopped and they instinctively and intuitively know it and fear it. Romans 1 speaks of how people seek to suppress the truth about God and about their own sin. I have read some thinkers who have been asking why in recent years the government in China has become more aggressive at home and internationally? Some have suggested that it is a reaction to the gospel movement in that country. There are easily over 100 million Christians in China. We don't form armies. We don't take land or cities. We don't view or use power like the world does, but the world doesn't understand that. Genuine

Christianity is a threat to everyone who does not follow God. And when the people of God get it together and come together on the right basis for the right reasons, then the enemies of God declare war. But, that's okay. Our God fights for us.

Rephaim means giants. The Valley of the Rephaim means the valley of the giants. This invasion by the Philistines was strategically savvy. They were headed straight for Jerusalem and were at the same time driving a wedge that threatened to dissect the north from the south. David and his army were able to defeat the Jebusites and conquer Jerusalem. However, facing the combined strength of the Philistine armies would be another matter. But, that's okay, our God fights for us.

2. **When we look to God for direction and follow his commands, our God fights for us.**
(19-21)

The Philistines went up to look for David and David went down to the stronghold. This is possibly the stronghold near the cave of Adullam. Here is a great example of godly leadership. David leads his men and he trusts in God. David leads his men even as he follows God. He leads from a posture of submission. David is in charge even as he is under the authority of God. He has been anointed and appointed as the king. This was ultimately from God, so David, by virtue of his God-ordained role has to lead. But, how is he going to do that? He leads by depending on God. Isn't that beautiful? He knows that as the king of the people of God that he is charged with defending the people of God. That is his job. But, how is he supposed to do it? He is supposed to do it in a manner that reflects the fact that he does not rely upon his own skill, understanding, strength or strategy. He relies upon God.

Beloved, just because you have a role of responsibility does not mean that you are always right. It means that your decisions are going to have greater consequences, so you better make sure that you are right. That is weighty and all by yourself, you are not up for it. You need to acknowledge that. The Lord is up for it, but we aren't. I regularly am contacted by churches and pastors asking for my counsel on a matter. Many of you have asked me to give you my opinion on a matter and often I will say, "Uh, I hate pressure." I don't want to give bad advice. I don't want to mess people's lives up. So, in those moments, I ask God for help because I know that if I rely just on my insight, it is not going to be helpful. Praise God he tells us to call upon him when we are in need of wisdom because he loves to give it generously to those who ask. David is obviously an effective leader. He is also a skillful and successful warrior. But those do not mean that he doesn't need the Lord, it is the fruit of him seeking the Lord and here he does it again.

So, David inquired of the Lord. He asked the Lord two things.

- Shall I go up against the Philistines?
- Will you give them into my hand?

David had assumed a defensive position in v.17. Does he stay in that or does he attack? Secondly, will I be successful? The LORD answers both questions. The LORD said to David:

- Go up,

- for I will certainly give the Philistines into your hand

I love the fact that the LORD added the word “certainly” in his answer. He could have just told David to go and that he would win and that would be that. But this was a great affirmation not only for David but for David to pass on to his men. David has just united the armies. His men had not fought against the Philistines and the northern army had been routed by them. The Philistines were powerful. They had chariots and advanced weapons. Israel was rural and backwards in many respects. They would have been outmanned and outgunned by a long shot. But our God fights for us. That changes everything and the LORD said, *“I will certainly give the Philistines into your hand.”*

2 more things before we get to point 3. 1) How did this work? And 2) Why don't we see more of this today? David did not have the Bible. The OT people of God had the books of Moses, but there were not many copies that people had. The book of Joshua and perhaps Judges was done by then, but the OT people of God did not have the history that we have nor did they have the completed revelation that we have either. One of the functions of the OT priest was to discern the will of God by means of using two stones called the Urim and Thummin. God gave them that. That era was foundational. That was for then. David would ask the priest to use those to seek God and God would answer, which he did.

Today, we do not need more promises and assurances from God. We have all that we need, right here. What we need is to believe them. For us, the issue is not revelation, it is belief. Even in our story, God answered David's prayer. He told him. And what did David do? He believed it and acted on it. Remember Gideon? God gave him a promise too and Gideon said, “are you sure?” Sure enough, David came to Baal-perazim and David defeated them there.” David described the battle as the LORD bursting through the Philistines before David like a bursting flood. David was overwhelmingly victorious but he attributes this to God doing the fighting. The Philistines are routed so badly that they leave their idols there. This may have been like waving the white flag. Your God beat our gods. Here, we surrender. It may have been that they retreated in such a panic that they did not have time to retrieve their idols. Either way, David and his men gather them up and according to the 1 Chronicles account, they burned them. Good! What an incredible victory! Instead of erecting a statue in his own honor, David names the place with a term that describes the manner in which the Lord defeated the Philistines. Their idols are useless before God who fights for his people.

But they don't have too much time to enjoy the win, do they? The Philistines came yet again and spread out in the Valley of Rephaim. Hey, this didn't work. We just got annihilated. Let's try it again. Say it with me. Sin causes brain damage. What is David going to do?

3. **When we keep looking to God for direction and keep following his commands, our God fights for us.** (22-25)

David is 2 for 2. He has defeated the Jebusites and now in round 1 he has defeated the Philistines. What is David tempted to do? He is tempted to presume that he can handle this on

his own. Joshua led the nation across the Jordan and then led them to victory at Jericho and then failed to ask consult with God before the disastrous battle of Ai. Praise God, David does not make the same mistake. The Philistines make the same mistake twice and David does the right thing – twice. To me, this is the biggest miracle of the text because we are so tempted to take credit for what God does and think that we are all that, when we are in need of God's grace and wisdom every single day. We never out grow our need of God. So, again, David inquired of the LORD and presumably asked the same two questions. And what? Good thing he did because the Lord had a different battle plan for David to follow. Do not go up (that is confront them directly like you did before). Instead go around them and be on the opposite side of the balsam trees. Then wait. Wait until you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the balsam trees. When you hear that, then rouse yourselves. That's a great command, isn't it? In other words, charge because I have taken care of business.

The Philistines are in the valley. David and his men come around and wait on the side. On the other side is the balsam trees and God creates the illusion of a massive army on that side, which throws the Philistines into confusion. Some of you remember the fashion designer, Bill Blass. What you may not know is that Bill used his design and drawing skills in W.W. II. He was part of a secret unit that was called the Ghost Army. I just read a book about them and it is very interesting. This unit used inflatable tanks and massive sound systems to make it appear and sound as if the U.S. Army was somewhere they weren't. They were good, but God was amazing! Assuming that they are being attacked from the side where the balsam trees were, the Philistines actually get attacked by David from the other. The LORD is a master at throwing his enemies into confusion.

Geba to Gezer