

David and Goliath

1 Samuel 17:51 "Therefore David ran and stood over the Philistine, took his sword and drew it out of its sheath and killed him, and cut off his head with it. And when the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled."

Sunday, January 17, 2021 at The First Congregational Church of Marshalltown, Iowa

Intro.

When a professional sports team wins a championship, many in that team's home city celebrate. Some teams have enjoyed ticker-tape parades. Because our daughter lives in Kansas City, I've become a (somewhat lukewarm) fan of Kansas City teams, and celebrated when the Royals won the World Series or when the Chiefs won the Super Bowl. Personally, I had absolutely nothing to do with either triumph. I don't even live in Kansas City, yet the Royals and the Chiefs our my champions, in a sense.

In other cultures, this identification with a champion goes to a greater length than in ours. People rise and fall by what happens with their champions. There is such an identification with the champion that their failure is the failure of all the people they represent. Their success is the success of all the people they represent as well. This is well demonstrated in this episode found in 1 Samuel 17.

Set the Stage

David, the future king of Israel, travels to a battlefield at which there is a stand-off between the army of Israel and that of their sworn enemies, the Philistines. In between the two armies stands Goliath, a giant of a man, who is the champion of the Philistines. Daily, for some time, he calls to Israel to choose a champion and engage him in a battle to the death. If he wins, the Philistines win the battle; if Israel's champion wins, then Israel wins the battle. David, though young and inexperienced, volunteers. Goliath greets him with scorn and vows to feed his remains to the birds, but David is undeterred, engages Goliath, defeats and kills him. Upon seeing this upset, the Philistine army did not rush onto the battlefield, rather they all turn and run for their lives as Israel runs in pursuit. Why? Because of what their champion did.

Jesus is our champion

The word for "great champion" is used in several contexts: *Jeremiah 20:11 "But the Lord is with me as a mighty, awesome One. Therefore my persecutors will stumble, and will not prevail. They will be greatly ashamed, for they will not prosper. Their everlasting confusion will never be forgotten."*

Jeremiah 32:18-20 "You show lovingkindness to thousands, and repay the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them-the Great, the Mighty God, whose name is the Lord of hosts. You are great in counsel and mighty in work, for your eyes are open to all the ways of the sons of men, to give everyone according to his ways and according to the fruit of his doings."

So the idea continues that for the people of God, God is our champion; that one on whom all our hope lie. We do not raise ourselves up by our own bootstraps. We have to make our best effort, but if we rise to the occasion, it is by the grace of God. If our champion fails, we fail. If our champion succeeds, we succeed.

Application: The New Testament echoes that same concept in one of the strongest statements of the divinity of Jesus in Titus 2:13 "...looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ," For the Christian, Jesus is our champion, and when we face the challenges and trials of life the question is not, "are we strong enough to face them" but "is our champion strong enough to face them." We are not. He is.

Conclusion

David, the future king of Israel, defeated a giant of a man in mortal combat against all odds on that ancient battleground. When David, the champion of Israel, won the battle, the army rushed forward for they had already won. The army of the Philistines ran for their lives because they had already lost. If your champion wins, you win. If your champion loses, you lose. It is a precious promise in the Bible that God is our champion, and in the New Testament, Jesus is our champion. We are accepted by a righteous and holy God by His merits, and His merits alone.