Five Smooth Stones- Part 3

# Closer Than a Brother

(1 Samuel 17:25-30)

Welcome, to part three of our series Five Smooth Stones as we examine this well-known story of David and Goliath. I am glad you decided to join us once again, because we have been digging in and learning some things about this story that maybe you haven’t seen before. In fact, we’ve been going so deep that you may have begun to wonder what Five Smooth Stones has to do with it. Well, I promise that we will get there, but today if you want to turn in your Bible to first Samuel chapter 17, we’re going to look at verse 25 through verse 30.

Now, before we begin, let me remind you of the context. Last week we saw the army of Israel facing the Philistine army and it just happened that at that moment, as David was talking with his brothers, the Bible says,

“Goliath, the Philistine champion from Gath, stepped out from his lines and shouted his usual defiance, and David heard it” (1 Samuel 17:23).

But it wasn’t just David who heard him, everybody heard him, because the Bible says,

“When the Israelites saw the man, they all ran from him in great fear” (1 Samuel 17:24).

Now, we know that they had heard him before, but the Bible doesn’t mention anybody else hearing. It says they saw this giant from Gath, and they ran from him in fear. However, David heard him, and as we come to our text today, we will see that he responded differently. Verse 25 says,

“Now the Israelites had been saying, "Do you see how this man keeps coming out? He comes out to defy Israel. The king will give great wealth to the man who kills him. He will also give him his daughter in marriage and will exempt his father's family from taxes in Israel."

“David asked the men standing near him, "What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and removes this disgrace from Israel? Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?"

“They repeated to him what they had been saying and told him, "This is what will be done for the man who kills him."

“When Eliab, David's oldest brother, heard him speaking with the men, he burned with anger at him and asked, "Why have you come down here? And with whom did you leave those few sheep in the desert? I know how conceited you are and how wicked your heart is; you came down only to watch the battle."

"Now what have I done?" said David. "Can't I even speak?" He then turned away to someone else and brought up the same matter, and the men answered him as before” (1 Samuel 17:25-30).

Now, this scene is kind of crazy, because David was so small, and Goliath was so big. And yet, we have trained professional soldiers in the heat of the battle pausing to answer the questions of this little boy. But what we discover is that God was setting the stage as we see the lineup, because we’re looking at the contenders, comparing the smallness of David and the great girth of Goliath. And this is the perfect set up for God to show his power, because God said,

“My power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

I want to talk to somebody here, somebody that is listening right now, and maybe you’re feeling a little inadequate. Maybe you’ve got a big calling on your life but only a little bit of faith, a large goal and a little bit of help, a big dream and a little bit of money, and so I want to draw your attention to the contrast between David and Goliath. Historians suggest that David was not even 5 feet tall, he was just a boy, but on the other hand the Bible says that Goliath,

“He was over nine feet tall” (1 Samuel 17:4).

And so, the difference between David and Goliath was greatly exaggerated, because Goliath was two or three times the size of David, but this was the perfect opportunity for God to step in and help the underdog. And we know that God does because the Bible says,

“God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong” (1 Corinthians 1:27).

And God will always choose the little thing, the foolish things, which is why when your calling feels too big, the task insurmountable, the vision beyond your abilities, that the enemy will always creep in and try to make you feel inadequate. Satan will try to intimidate you, because he wants to weaken your faith, diminishing your potential, and destroying your confidence by getting you to look at your Goliath. He wants you to see your enemy like the Israelites did, because when they saw Goliath,

“They all ran from him in great fear” (1 Samuel 17:24).

You see, when you live by sight, considering how things look, and you begin comparing yourself, you will begin doubting yourself; questioning whether you can do the job, feeling like you can’t teach well enough, doubting that you can sing good enough, and you begin feeling inadequate for the place where God has positioned you.

In fact, some of you are coming into a situation, an opportunity, a ministry that you’re about to step into. And your spiritual enemy is trying to convince you how small you are, how weak you are, and how little you have to offer, because if he can convince you that you are too small, he’s already defeated you. In other words, if the devil can get you to say, like the Israelites did,

“We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes" (Numbers 13:33).

You will be defeated before you even step into the promise of God. And so, you’ve got to know who you are and whose you are, in spite of your stature, in spite of your training, in spite of your strength, and in spite of your feelings, because God chose to use a little boy delivering lunch to deliver the nation of Israel and little is much in God’s economy.

You see, he could have sent an angel from heaven, but instead of sending Michael or Gabriel, he chose to send David so that he might get even more glory. And so, here is David on the battlefield asking the soldiers, "What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and removes this disgrace from Israel?” And when Eliab, David's oldest brother, heard him speaking with the men, he burned with anger at him and asked,

"Why have you come down here? And with whom did you leave those few sheep in the desert? I know how conceited you are and how wicked your heart is; you came down only to watch the battle” (1 Samuel 17:28).

I wonder how many of you have somebody in your life who can be overly critical? In fact, if you’re sitting next to them, just keep looking straight ahead and pretend you’re not hearing what I’m saying... But I wonder if any of you have someone in your life that believes they have the spiritual gift of fault finding? You know, someone who evaluates your character, considers your motives, and criticizes everything you do? Well, today we want to consider how to deal with the critical people in our lives.

You see, everybody has an Eliab, and so no matter where you are or what you do, if you are in any kind of relationship, if you are making a difference where you are, you are going to face criticism. In other words, if you’re alive and breathing, especially if you are a follower of Jesus, you are going to deal with criticism, because you’re going to be different from the world. Your values are going to be different, your perspective is going to be different, and so you will be criticized and even persecuted.

David came down to the battlefield to bring his brothers lunch, he had come down to help, but instead of them being grateful, the Bible says Eliab tried to tear him down. I wonder if there are any of you who can relate. Have ever tried to help somebody that didn’t want or appreciate your help? And so, instead of welcoming you, and thanking you for your help, they attempted to tear you down and make you feel inferior in front of others. Well, that’s what Eliab did, he said to David,

"Why have you come down here? And with whom did you leave those few sheep in the desert?" (1 Samuel 17:28).

And so, how do we deal with those overly critical people? You know, maybe someone you work for, maybe a spouse, a brother or sister, mom or dad? How do we respond appropriately to those who are often so very critical of us? As followers of Jesus, how do we respond lovingly to people with a critical spirit?

Well, I want you to notice what David did and I pray that this will speak to you in a powerful way. First, he responded very carefully, because responding is very different from reacting. You see, reacting is an emotion, but when you respond it gives you an opportunity to be led by the Holy Spirit. And so, when David was being criticized because of what he was doing, he responded,

"Now what have I done? Can't I even speak?" (1 Samuel 17:29).

In other words, he didn’t defend himself, he didn’t shoot back with his own snarky remark, but he simply responded calmly and rationally.

And each of us at some point in our lives are going to be criticized, it may be passive aggressive, or it may be openly malicious, but somebody is going to criticize you. They may question your decision to go to Bible school instead of business school. They may comment on how much time you spend at church on Wednesdays, Fridays, Sundays, and everything in between. They may criticize you for choosing to stay at home with your children when you have so much talent or on the other hand criticize you for going to work when you have all of those children.” And so, when your friend, neighbor, or coworker criticizes you, what do you do?

Well, I think the Bible teaches us that it is wise to wait before you respond, to be slow to speak, because when your feelings get hurt and emotions are high, godly wisdom is at an all-time low. And so, the Bible says,

“A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense” (Proverbs 19:11).

Therefore, instead of reacting when emotions are high, just wait. In other words, when you type out that reply, don’t hit send, but wait a little while, because you want to be led by the Holy Spirit instead of being driven by your emotions.

And then other times, like Jesus, you just don’t respond. You see, just because somebody criticizes you, it doesn’t mean you are obligated to respond. I want you to notice that this was a very common way for Jesus to respond, he just didn’t respond. I could show you many examples, but the apostle Peter summarized it saying,

“When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly” (1 Peter 2:23).

And so, they insulted him and criticized him saying that he was a friend of sinners, he partied too much, he was a lunatic, he was a heretic, and they just went on and on and on. But of course, none of it was true, and so Jesus didn’t retaliate, he didn’t defend himself, he didn’t make any comment, but he entrusted himself to his Father in heaven. And so, you don’t need to respond to your critics, just because they have criticized you doesn’t mean that you need to give them a reply.

In our text, David is questioning the soldiers, considering coming against Goliath, a giant of a man twice his size, and you would think his brothers would rally around him, building up the morale of the troops, kind of like a pep rally. But instead, Satan tried to use his brother to discourage him, deflate his confidence, and make him feel inadequate. And so, instead of getting some support and encouragement from the people that should have loved him most, they laughed at David.

I want to encourage those of you who are fighting Eliab today. God wouldn’t have brought you down into the valley and onto the battlefield if you were not meant to be here at such a time as this. But there are some of you that have been so distracted, so busy fighting Eliab, so concerned with defending yourself that Goliath continues to go unchallenged in your life. And so, if you recognize that you’ve been distracted, missing opportunities to face your real opponent, I want you to notice what David did because this was a very strategic move on his part. Verse 30 says,

“He then turned away to someone else and brought up the same matter” (1 Samuel 17:30).

In other words, David turned away from his critics, turned away from the distraction, and turning away from his brother he continued his conversation with someone else. That was so important because Eliab wasn’t the enemy, he’s the brother David was supposed to be fighting for, and the moment he turned away from Eliab it positioned him to face Goliath.

Now, I don’t want to diminish in any way the deep and significant hurts that David experienced in the valley that day from his brother. I’m sure there was part of him that wanted to defend himself, to strike back, because it wasn’t fair, the accusations weren’t true, but the Bible says,

“There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother” (Proverbs 18:24).

David recognized that he didn’t have to defend himself and he trusted God to lift him above it all. And so, sometimes, you’ve got to recognize that God has something better for you, that whatever you’re going through, whatever pain you’ve experienced, in that moment, you determine not to let something lower keep you from a higher calling. In fact, we’ve still got time, and so let’s go deeper.

You see, sometimes we experience painful things, we go through difficult seasons, where the event, the season, or the activity requires that God allow us to be wounded for a short time so that we can be blessed into eternity. The Bible tells us in Proverbs chapter 27,

“Wounds from a friend can be trusted” (Proverbs 27:6).

And so, I want you to receive this with the mind of Christ, recognizing that wounds and healing have something in common. I know it’s hard to comprehend, and it’s even harder to accept when you’re going through it, because you wouldn’t think that God would use wounds to heal you, but the Bible says in Isaiah chapter 53,

“By his wounds we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5).

In other words, God is telling us that the price, the cost of true healing is wounding. And so, if he really loves you, he may wound you for a short time, so that he can have you for eternity.

I know that’s difficult to grasp, but certainly, you haven’t forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons and daughters. The Bible tells us in Hebrews chapter 12,

“Do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and (he what?) he punishes everyone he accepts as a son" (Hebrews 12:5-6).

And so, David was a little brother, the shepherd boy left out in the field, forgotten by his father, ignored by his brothers, ridiculed by Eliab, but each of those events brought about God’s purpose with eternal results. And even though David was wounded by those who should have loved him most, God worked through all of that, and the result was the healing of the nation of Israel.

But it was all a process, it took time, and so let me illustrate it to you this way. If you’ve got cancer, maybe it’s causing you pain, or threatening the longevity of your life, and so the doctor is going to tell you that they are going to do surgery. The surgeon is going to cut out the cancer, they’re going to wound you so that you might be healed. And when you come out from under the anesthesia, you may be swollen, you may be in pain, but they tell you what? They say the surgery was successful because,

“Wounds from a friend can be trusted” (Proverbs 27:6).

And so, if you didn’t get the surgery, if you hadn’t been wounded, unless God miraculously healed you, you would have been overcome by the cancer. But sometimes, when you ask God to heal you, he allows you to be wounded, because he’s looking for something better, something greater, he’s looking for eternal results.

As we close today, we’re going to celebrate communion, and so, we’ve been talking about David and his brother Eliab, but we’re going so much deeper than that, we’re talking about wounds from a friend. And we understand that when God got ready to heal the world from sin, he sent his son Jesus to the cross to be wounded. And so it was that later, after his resurrection from the dead, when Thomas was doubting and unbelieving, it wasn’t the appearance of Jesus that caused him to believe, it was Jesus’ wounds that caused him to believe.

The Bible says, Jesus told Thomas,

“Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe" (John 20:27).

He said, touch my wounds, see where I was hurting, consider how I suffered, stop doubting and believe. And when Thomas felt his wounds, when he felt his pain, he fell down and said to him,

“My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28).

Now, why would he say that? Because wounds from a friend can be trusted.

Some of you have been through a test, you’re going through a trial, and you cried out to God. You may have struggled to find faith to believe, but you knew if it happened, God had allowed it. You knew that wounds from a friend could be trusted because,

“If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31).

That’s why it is important that we learn to trust God like Job did. He trusted God, he said, “I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end…” the result will be better than the beginning (Job 19:25). Job said, “In my flesh I will see God” (Job 19:26).

And so, when we are wounded and we go through something painful, even though we don’t like it, we can trust God, because wounds from a friend can be trusted. We can trust that if God allowed it to happen it’s going to come out for our good. And that’s what it means to trust God, because you don’t need to trust God when you get a promotion. You need to trust God when you get laid off, in the crisis, and the problem. You need to trust God when you don’t understand his timing, or his method, because as the Bible says,

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight” (Proverbs 3:5-6).

It may not make sense to you, but you can trust him in that moment, in that season, when you’re in pain, because in the long run, after the wounding, after the cutting away, after the surgery, there is healing. Jesus said it this way in John chapter 15,

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit, he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful” (John 15:1-2).

You can’t do this by yourself, the Father is the gardener, and so you’ve got to trust God, you got to trust him when he is cutting, you’ve got to trust what he is pruning, and you’ve got to trust him where he is making the incision. You don’t have to know all the details, but you know that he is there, and his presence brings you comfort.

In other words, he’s going to keep you company, he’s going to be there for you, because he said,

“I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends…” (John 15:15).

This is important, because we’ve got to trust God as he is taking us through this, trusting him in the chaos, and in this economy. Trusting him for groceries and a full tank of gas, trusting him in the pain, and the difficulty, and for eternity because, it is by his wounds that we are healed (Isaiah 53:5).

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