

# One from the Heart

## Overcoming Battles Through Faith

Throughout history, times of war have often been defined by significant battles. Of course, on ANZAC Day we think primarily of those dreadful days on the coves and cliffs of Gallipoli's shores but there were so many battles in so many various theatres of war over the years. I think to some degree we remember those who suffered and sacrificed not just to honour them but to remember how everyone pays a high price during times of war.

There's something that changes in a nation's spirit when they realise they are at war and facing battles. For the soldier on the front line of course the battle is very real but there are other battles faced at home with grief and worry, loneliness and hardship. Sacrifice is not only about young men and women on the battle front but also the cost to the nation as a whole.

As Christ followers we easily forget that we are in a constant spiritual battle. There is a real battle between the forces of good and evil, between the Kingdom of Light and the kingdom of darkness. Jesus may have won the war but you and I are still face battles over our love, loyalty and faith (1 John 2:15-17; Ephesians 6:12).

David – a battle hardened warrior awarded the “Order of the Godly Heart” (1 Samuel 13:14). God delighted in David because David demonstrated faith in God.

We can trace the growth in the life of David by citing four tough battles David fought and won. Each victory expanded David's faith in God, and each qualified him for a more difficult battle.

### **Battle 1: “The Bear” - A Battle with Appetites of the World (1 Samuel 17: 32-37)**

The killing of the bear can symbolise the conquering of our appetites – the lusts of the flesh and the eyes (1 John 2:15-17).

Romans 8:11-13 states that we are not under any obligation to live according to the flesh, but to live according to the Holy Spirit. Many people struggle to live by faith believing that God will supply all their needs (Philippians 4:19; Matthew 6:25-34).

We don't need to find our security or comfort in these things of the flesh. David, destined for the throne, had to conquer his fleshly appetites or his life would be wasted in spite of his initial anointing.

**Challenge:** *Just like David, God has chosen you for a special purpose in life, for relationship with Him. What appetites of the world are you messing with? What steps do you need to take to conquer these? Are you exercising a faith in God that trusts Him to meet all your needs?*

## **Battle 2: "The Lion" - A Battle with Pride (1 Samuel 17: 32-37)**

It was a mixture of David exercising his faith in God and an empowering of the Holy Spirit that enabled David to overcome the lion.

The lion can symbolise pride and ambition (1 John 2:15-17). By killing the "lion" we conquer our right to reign as king of our own life and we break our pride.

The Bible warns that pride comes before a fall (Proverbs 16:18). God wants us to be people who are motivated to use our gifts to do the best we can to glorify His name and serve one another.

**Challenge:** *A prideful life doesn't rely on a faith in God. What are the locked doors of your life that God is patiently waiting for you to hand the keys over to?*

## **Battle 3: "The Giant" - Spiritual Battles (1 Samuel 17:40-47)**

The giant symbolises the enemy who taunts our God. Killing the giant can represent learning to take authority over evil spirits.

Don't take on the giants of evil spirits unless you have conquered your appetites of the flesh and your pride, because giants don't fall without the power of God.

To recognise that there is a battle going on for your mind is an important step in maturing as a Christian. Not only old habits need breaking but there needs to be a continual renewing of our minds, recognising that we are victors in Christ and have a position of eternal hope (Romans 12:1-2; Ephesians 1:13-14; 6:10-18).

The Christian life is a spiritual battle. Paul names six different parts of Spiritual armour the Christian should wear (Ephesians 6:10-18). When he comes to the shield of faith he emphasises its importance by saying, "in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith...".

Faith is important because it honours God, and God always honours faith.

**Challenge:** *Where has the enemy been able to fire at you knowing your shield of faith is not up?*

#### **Battle 4: "The King and the Philistines" - Flirting with the Darkness (1 Samuel 30)**

In despair from years of harassment, David caved in and sold out to the enemy. He left Israel and joined the worst of Israel's enemies, the Philistines (1 Samuel 27:1) only to find that his misplaced loyalty ruined his family.

What had David done that he should be rewarded with ashes?

- + By living with the Philistines, he began to act like the Philistines (1 Samuel 27:10,11)
- + He lived out an unholy alliance of darkness and light (2 Corinthians 6: 14-17)
- + He began to receive praise from the enemy (1 Samuel 29:9)
- + He became useful to the enemy (1 Samuel 27:12)

This tragedy drove David to God and he strengthened himself in the Lord his God (1 Samuel 30:6). David relied on God's counsel and sought God with all his heart.

**Challenge:** *David lacked faith that God knew what He was doing, and sought refuge in the enemy's camp. Is God asking you to "hang in there" waiting for His timing?*

Despite David's ups and downs, God delighted in David because he had a faith in God that saw David through the many battles of his life. David always swung back to centre to follow God's purpose for his life, and it was his increasing faith in God that saw him through the tough times.

### **Some practical ways we can bolster our faith in God?**

- + Seek God in prayer, and the support of others to pray for you in times of need
- + Seek ongoing counsel and even deliverance ministry if needed
- + Find a person who you feel comfortable in sharing your struggles with; yet also someone who is strong enough to pull you up in the areas that need addressing
- + Live a Spirit filled and empowered life
- + Give thanks and walk in faith
- + Live in obedience to God's Word and will

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. Share with the group an area of your life where you have battled either pride, appetites of the flesh, spiritual battles or flirting with the darkness. Discuss how each trial can be used by God to do the following: build one up rather than destroy; increase one's faith; ward off spiritual stagnation; increase your sphere of influence; lead to "rest in faith".
2. List some pressures that could move people out of God's church and into the camp of the enemy.
3. How might our lives demonstrate Philistine behaviour?
4. How, in each of the above areas, might we end up with ashes as a result of selling out to the enemy?
5. What practical steps have you found effective in standing firm in your faith amidst times of trouble or persecution?