

Winning the Head Game II - Opposition

Running to Victory:

1 Samuel 17:25-37

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God has put you and me together. He intends for us together to become completely like Jesus, extending God's salvation to the world. The Apostle Paul wrote:

It was (Christ) who gave some to be apostles... prophets... evangelists... pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. (Ephesians 4:11-13, NIV)

God puts people with certain gifts in our lives to prepare us, so that whatever we do – share cookies with a neighbor, write notes of encouragement, teach Sunday School, rake lawns, pray for people, share an answered prayer – our service helps us together reach unity in what we believe and know of Christ. Through this process we become mature, seasoned, wise, and consequently attain **the whole measure of the fullness of Christ**.

God has marked out a course for you and me that will accomplish that. Our heavenly Father actually plans to have us run this course and win. We make a decisive difference.

In 1492 when Christopher Columbus landed in the new world, he not only changed the destiny of the people he visited. He also changed the world beyond. The reverberations from his actions changed life in Europe and America. Hundreds of years later, the effects of Columbus's

actions are easy to track. Although your influence may not be obvious for hundreds of years, God grows you to win a great victory for creation.

Your victory, however, is not secure. It requires your persistent faith. When people run a race, they are tempted by aching sides and tired legs. There is a head game. Runners fight thoughts. They face more opposition than the terrain and other runners.

In the Bible, David faced the giant adversary, Goliath, and he also suffered friendly fire. To defeat Goliath, David had to survive the opposition of his brother first, his king next and then the giant. His brother and king attacked his position, motives and adequacy.

When David saw the giant scare the Israelites, he also overheard conversations between Israelite soldiers about the reward the king offered to anyone who defeated Goliath. He asked about it. The Bible says:

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, NIV)

David faced anger from his oldest brother. Eliab accused David of being irresponsible and out of place. David heard that he didn't belong on the battlefield from a brother who he might have expected to welcome and support him.

Eliab not only attacked David's position, he challenged David's motives. He alleged that David was prideful and dishonest with people. He cast David's faith as something dark and evil. He identified David's presence, interest in Goliath and faith as signs of wickedness. Eliab was angry. I think he believed those evil things about David.

David could not placate his brother. He could not satisfy Eliab with an answer. Neither could Jesus satisfy his brothers. James and Jude who wrote two books of the New Testament

were brothers of Jesus, who did not originally support Jesus' ministry. They and other members of Jesus' family questioned his motives and tried to remove him from it. It seems they became believers only after Jesus was crucified, buried and raised from the dead.

David like Jesus kept his focus:

"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... (1 Samuel 17:29-30, NIV)

Have you had your position and motives questioned by people who know you? Have you been accused falsely of evil motives when you were acting in faith?

During World War II the Nazis fought with a fifth column. They dropped a column of warriors, English-speaking soldiers, behind enemy lines to confuse the allied armies. Americans had to overcome this opposition and the enemy's front. Eliab was not a secret enemy, but he hindered David. No doubt he loved his brother, but he reminds me of Peter who loved Jesus but scolded him for talking about dying. Jesus said to Peter:

Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me... (Matthew 16:23, NIV)

Unwittingly, Peter and Eliab represented Satan's fifth column. Duped by a spirit of unbelief dropped into the believing camp, they challenged the faith-born actions of people they loved. We can unwittingly be stumbling blocks, pawns of Satan's opposition, if we don't take God's presence seriously. Just as likely, however, we face opposition, friendly fire, from people who love us. Our position, motives and adequacy may be challenged.

Hearing of David's inquiries about rewards for defeating Goliath, King Saul sent for David. Remember, Saul knew David because David played his harp for Saul; and on special occasions David carried King Saul's armored shield. Don't you love David's bravado?

David said to Saul, "Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him." (1 Samuel 17:32, NIV)

David did not let the attacks of his brother cloud his faith. However, one more blow came.

"Don't be ridiculous!" Saul replied. "There is no way you can go against this Philistine. You are only a boy, and he has been in the army since he was a boy!" (1 Samuel 17:33, NIV)

By his own king, David was told that he was unthinkable and inadequate. There all kinds of reason that we may be judged unthinkable and inadequate. Like David we may be considered too young and inexperienced. Just as likely we may be considered too old, part of the problem, too stubborn, lacking a record, lacking gifts, or whatever. Does it really matter why you are considered unthinkable and inadequate? The key to winning is faith to press on, faith to pursue, faith to believe all things are possible, and not to succumb to the idea that "this is too hard, this is too long, it would have happened already if it was going to happen."

Today, God is grooming you to win with a faith that wins. You're his craftsmanship. You're being built to reveal his glory. God is preparing you to win the head game necessary to win the day. God is doing that with us together.

What's discouraging you today? What is causing you to shrink back? Hear God's personal call to you:

Consider (Jesus) who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart... Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. (Hebrews 12:3, 7, NIV)

Do you realize that God disciplined Jesus, not because Jesus was naughty, but because he was being developed to win a race? I am God's witness that he is doing the same for you! Discipline is for development. Yes, it involves correction now and then for sinners, but it is

always for development. Consider Jesus then; for similarly, God's grooming you for victory!

Your actions of faith are significant. They will reverberate throughout the world the redemption that is needed. Believe it!