

“Live Like a Champion!”

1 Samuel 21:1-2, 8-9; Proverbs 24:16; Psalm 51:14,

In 1977 the British rock group produced the song “We Are the Champions!” to motivate soccer fans to become more involved with their music. This song has gone on to become defining sports song of all time. Let’s listen to the chorus ... [snippet one].

What is a champion, really? As I look at the Scriptures one man stands head and shoulders above the rest as a champion ... King David, Acts 13:22-23, But God removed Saul and replaced him with David, a man about whom God said, ‘I have found David son of Jesse, a man after my own heart. He will do everything I want him to do.’ [23] “And it is one of King David’s descendants, Jesus, who is God’s promised Savior of Israel!

So, let’s look a bit at David’s roller-coaster life as a champion for God. There’s 4 stages in David’s life:

- Famous stage. He slew the giant Goliath with his slingshot.
- Fleeing stage. David runs for his life from an unbalanced Saul.
- Floundering stage. After ascending to power and prestige, David commits adultery, then murder.
- Faithful stage. Finally, David seeks God’s forgiveness and serves God faithfully.

Specifically, what marks a person for “champion” status?

A. Champions push through adversity.

Let’s look at the first verse ... [snippet 2]

I’ve paid my dues -

Time after time – (David, the youngest, scrawniest of Jesse’s boys was chosen. 1 Sam 16:7, But the LORD said to Samuel, “Don’t judge by his appearance or height, for I have rejected him. The LORD doesn’t see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”

We often think of champions as being big, athletic, naturally good-looking, and obviously “champion material.” Wrong! Champions are built from the inside-out.

I’ve done my sentence

But committed no crime – (David had only been faithful to Saul, but was paid with treachery)

1 Samuel 21:1-2, 8-9, David went to the town of Nob to see Ahimelech the priest. Ahimelech trembled when he saw him. "Why are you alone?" he asked. "Why is no one with you?" [2] "The king has sent me on a private matter," David said. "He told me not to tell anyone why I am here. I have told my men where to meet me later.

-- David's on the run ... having committed no crime.

-- Nob (on the outskirts of Jerusalem) is the spiritual hub of Israel in these days, the Ark of the Covenant was there, and so was Ahimelech, the high priest. At David's time of crisis he sought out God's people and Godly insight.

I've had my share of sand kicked in my face -
But I've come through

-- Here is a bit of a soccer reference ... but all of us understand the "sand in the face" metaphor.

-- Sometimes life just slaps you to the ground. Champions get up. Proverbs 24:16, "for though a righteous man falls seven times, he rises again, but the wicked are brought down by calamity."

B. Champions maintain focus.

A champion understands his #1 opponent is *himself*. [snippet 3]

I've taken my bows
And my curtain calls -
You brought me fame and fortune and everything that goes with it -
I thank you all -

-- Queen is doing some self-congratulation here. The band said in one interview that this song was their version of Frank Sinatra's "I did it My Way" song.

-- It's okay to pat yourself on the back and feel good about your positive accomplishments ... as long as the applause doesn't drown out God's voice within you.

-- Pride, it's your greatest foe. A champion never pursues the trophy for the trophy's sake, instead, the champion determines what kind of man deserves such a prize, and chooses to be that kind of man.

I want to go back and pick up a phrase from verse one ... "And bad mistakes, I've made a few."

-- When David became King, he let it go to his head. He lost sight of how scrawny he was, and imagined himself, "invincible."
-- David saw a beautiful woman bathing, and committed adultery with her.
-- To cover up his crime against God, he arranged to have her husband murdered at the hand of barbarians.
-- And, it crushed him. Psalm 51 is a stirring account of David's confession before God, and in Psalm 51:14, David declares, "God, save me from the guilt of murder, God of my salvation, and I will sing about your goodness."
-- David had lost his way ... with disastrous results, but was glad to know God could restore him to champion status once again.
-- Are there any wounded champions amongst us today? Perhaps as one point your heart was passionate for Christ; but, for whatever reason, you're not that champion for Christ that you once were. Take heart, God's grace is especially good for the fallen.

C. Champions build momentum.

True champions learn from their failures, and their successes, to become more faithful to God over time.

ILLY: I learned an interesting bit of trivia about this song ... scientists conducted a careful study of 1000's to songs to determine which song is the MOST sing-able of all time. It's Queen's "We are the champions!" The way the song and lyrics are written, the complex mathematical combinations that make music sound great ... and even the way the song builds. Slow and soft ... then louder ... the BOOMING. It's awesome. Just like this song, champions build momentum over time.

I absolutely LOVE this part of David's story ... he's running for his life, with literally nothing more than the clothes on his back, not even a weapon to defend himself with ... and so we come to 1 Samuel 21:8-9, David asked Ahimelech, "Do you have a spear or sword? The king's business was so urgent that I didn't even have time to grab a weapon!" [9] "I only have the sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom you killed in the valley of Elah," the priest replied. "It is wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod. Take that if you want it, for there is nothing else here." "There is nothing like it!" David replied. "Give it to me!"

Any past success you've had with the LORD ... build on it. David killed Goliath, killed him dead. That inspired a whole nation to victory. Later, when David needed a boost, God led him back to that victory to spur him forward. The sword! THAT sword? Are you kidding me? At David's low point God provided just the boost he needed to encourage him.

Ask God to take what you've learned so far from Him ... and boost you forward!

D. What do champions do next?

Our song for today ends strangely ... listen ... [snippet 4]

We are the champions - my friends
And we'll keep on fighting - till the end -
We are the champions -
We are the champions
No time for losers
'Cause we are the champions ... [of the world]

A couple things ... "no time for losers."

- When I graduated from high school, in 1978, the 49ers were 2-14, the laughing-stock of the NFL.
- For 8 years, from 2003 to 2010 the 49ers didn't have a winning season.
- Losers? The 49ers are 5-0 in super bowls!
- Ecclesiastes 3:1 says, "There's a time and a season for everything ..." It's what you DO with a losing season that builds for the future.

Secondly, listen again to the very end of the song ... [snippet 5]

We are the champions -
We are the champions
No time for losers
'Cause we are the champions ... (of the world)

Queen wrote the song to get people involved ... pumped up ... YOU become the champion as you listen to the song. At the end, you raise your hands high and say, "OF THE WORLD!"

Sounds good to me. BE the champion God has called you to be.

A closing prayer ... "Dear God, we are a scrawny lot, and we've chalked up quite a few losses along the way. We understand now we are perfect candidates for champion status. You've already picked us for Your team, now shape and mold us through adversity. Focus our attention upon You. Build a Godly momentum into our lives. In Jesus' name, amen."