

1 Samuel 17 – “David vs. Goliath: The Battle Belongs to the Lord”

A certain archaeologist was digging in the Negev Desert in Israel and came upon a sarcophagus containing a mummy. After examining it, he called the curator of a prestigious natural-history museum.

"I've just discovered the 3,000-year-old mummy of a man who died of heart failure!" the excited archaeologist exclaimed.

The curator replied, "Bring him in. We'll check it out."

A week later, the amazed curator called the archaeologist. "You were right about the mummy's age and his cause of death. But how in the world did you know?" he asked.

The archaeologist replied, "Easy. There was a piece of paper in his hand that read, '10,000 shekels on Goliath.'"

Summary Statement:

The encounter between David and Goliath illustrates the stark contrast between faith and fear, showcasing how David's trust in God allowed him to confront and conquer a seemingly unbeatable foe, encapsulating the reality of divine victory for the humble and faithful.

Tonight I want to look at several lessons we learn as we go through this very familiar story.

1. The Intimidation of Goliath – 17:1-27

17:1-3 - *Now the Philistines gathered their armies together to battle, and were gathered at Sochoh, which belongs to Judah; they encamped between Sochoh and Azekah, in Ephes Dammim. ² And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered together, and they encamped in the Valley of Elah, and drew up in battle array against the Philistines. ³ The Philistines stood on a mountain on one side, and Israel stood on a mountain on the other side, with a valley between them.*

These problematic enemies of Israel are coming against them again. Remember, these were all enemies that were to be wiped out when Israel came into the promised land. But the Israelites never completed the job fully and are constantly battling these guys.

So the Philistines come and encamp between Sochoh and Azekah [show map]. The Valley of Elah lays between them and Israel. It's a large plain that would have been very suitable for battle.

17:4 - *And a champion went out from the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath, from Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span.*

Here comes Goliath. He's a champion it says from the camp of the Philistines. This is no metaphor for some fierce opponent; this guy is truly a giant of a man. He's measured at six cubits and a span. A cubit was 18 inches, and a span was half that. So, he's measuring at 9'9". This is a giant of a man.

- You'll remember that when the spies went into the Promised land to spy it out, they freaked out because there were giants in the land. The word there is translated Nephilim and were part of this race that corrupted the daughters of men in Genesis 6:4. The Anakim came from these giants as well.
- During the conquest of Canaan, Joshua expelled the Anakim from the hill country, and Caleb finally drove them out of Hebron completely. However, a small remnant was able to retreat to the cities of Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod – Philistine territory (Joshua 11:22). Many believe that Goliath descended from the Anakites.

Now just to give you some visual representation, Robert Wadlow, who is the tallest person on record, stood at 8'11". Goliath would have towered over him! He's a fine physical specimen and then look at the armour this guy had...

17:5-7 - *He had a bronze helmet on his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail, and the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of bronze. ⁶ And he had bronze armor on his legs and a bronze javelin between his shoulders. ⁷ Now the staff of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and his iron spearhead weighed six hundred shekels; and a shield-bearer went before him.*

Goliath wore a coat of mail which was like a breastplate. Now we read of Saul having one too in vs. 38, but there's an extra Hebrew word here to speak of Goliath's coat, it's the word *gasgeset*, which means 'scale'. Remember the Philistine chief deity – Dagon. He was a half fish, half man deity (1 Samuel 5). So this coat of mail was fashioned with these scales to most likely represent this fish god they worshipped.

But the real point to make is that it weighed 5000 shekels, which was 125 pounds! His iron spearhead weighed 600 shekels or about 15 pounds!

Goliath would have put the fear into anyone!

- Interestingly the Philistines were known for their iron work and their advanced weaponry. When I was just recently on Crete (where the Philistines came from) I visited the museum where many weapons and swords were on display from this period.

Lesson #1: The enemy wants to take you captive with fear.

17:8-10 - *Then he stood and cried out to the armies of Israel, and said to them, “Why have you come out to line up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and you the servants of Saul? Choose a man for yourselves, and let him come down to me. ⁹ If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will be your servants. But if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall be our servants and serve us.” ¹⁰ And the Philistine said, “I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together.”*

In this day some battles would be fought and won man vs. man. Winner take all! So Goliath is telling the Israelites to select a man to take him on. If he defeats Goliath, the Philistines will surrender. If Goliath wins, the Israelites must surrender.

- Now we know who the victory goes to, but the Philistines didn't live up to their deal. They didn't surrender but fled. They continued to be a thorn in the side of the Israelites (18:30). The lesson is clear, the enemy is a liar. He'll say whatever he can to make you think you can master your sin, but if you allow it to remain, it will continue to be a thorn in your side.

Goliath taunts the nation by saying: ***I defy the armies of Israel...*** This was heaping up ridicule and shame.

- Goliath's name means, 'taken captive'. 'Stripped (as a captive)'. This is exactly what the enemy wants to do. He wants to lead you into captivity and isolation where you're no longer experiencing the peace and joy of fellowship with God. This is what sin does. Don't allow the enemy to strip you of the good things God has for you.

17:11 - *When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid.*

Notice that Saul was greatly dismayed. Who would have been the go to guy for Israel? Who would have most people been looking to represent them? Saul! He was taller than everyone else. They picked him as their king for his physical

prowess. I'm sure Saul is feeling everybody looking to him thinking, 'Well Saul? Are you or aren't you?'

He's seeing his predicament and he's shaking. And remember, 1 Samuel 16:14 says that the Spirit of the Lord had departed from Saul.

- We're going to be ill-prepared for battle and will be gripped with fear if we're not moving forward in the power of the Spirit!

Fear is a very real tactic of the enemy. The enemy may have a very loud bark, but his bite has been taken away.

- **Colossians 2:15**, *"Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it."*

Faith in God enables you to move ahead despite fear. Did David have an absence of fear going up against Goliath? I would venture to say no. But his faith was in God and he moved ahead despite fear.

- God doesn't always remove the problems in front of you, but He does give you the strength to move through them by faith. Don't let the enemy's taunts squash your faith. Know that God is greater and let your faith in Him overshadow any fear.

Lesson #2: God works through the mundane things to lead you to the main thing.

17:12-15 - *Now David was the son of that Ephrathite of Bethlehem Judah, whose name was Jesse, and who had eight sons. And the man was old, advanced in years, in the days of Saul. ¹³ The three oldest sons of Jesse had gone to follow Saul to the battle. The names of his three sons who went to the battle were Eliab the firstborn, next to him Abinadab, and the third Shammah. ¹⁴ David was the youngest. And the three oldest followed Saul. ¹⁵ But David occasionally went and returned from Saul to feed his father's sheep at Bethlehem.*

We're introduced to Jesse's family again here. At least the three oldest (as we were in chapter 16). They're serving in the army, but David being young is faithfully serving Saul. He's playing music for him and calming him down. I think there would have been need for a lot of calming of Saul during this standoff with Goliath. Nevertheless, David would return home every so often to take care of the sheep at home in Bethlehem.

17:16-18 - *And the Philistine drew near and presented himself forty days, morning and evening. ¹⁷ Then Jesse said to his son David, “Take now for your brothers an ephah of this dried grain and these ten loaves, and run to your brothers at the camp. ¹⁸ And carry these ten cheeses to the captain of their thousand, and see how your brothers fare, and bring back news of them.”*

As the army would be out in battle, they would feed off the land around them. Since they've been stationed here for 40 days, supply is running low. So David is sent to bring food to his brothers and cheese for the captain and see how they're doing.

Interestingly it's been 40 days that Goliath has been presenting himself morning and evening. 40 days is a common number in Scripture. This is no coincidence. Forty is the number of testing in Scripture:

- It rained 40 days and 40 nights while Noah was in the ark (Genesis 7:12).
- The 12 spies went into Canaan to spy it out for 40 days (Numbers 13:25).
- The children of Israel wandered 40 years in the wilderness (Num 32:13).
- Jesus was tempted in the wilderness for 40 days (Mark 1:13).

17:19-24 - *Now Saul and they and all the men of Israel were in the Valley of Elah, fighting with the Philistines. ²⁰ So David rose early in the morning, left the sheep with a keeper, and took the things and went as Jesse had commanded him. And he came to the camp as the army was going out to the fight and shouting for the battle. ²¹ For Israel and the Philistines had drawn up in battle array, army against army. ²² And David left his supplies in the hand of the supply keeper, ran to the army, and came and greeted his brothers. ²³ Then as he talked with them, there was the champion, the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name, coming up from the armies of the Philistines; and he spoke according to the same words. So David heard them. ²⁴ And all the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him and were dreadfully afraid.*

When we read that they were fighting with the Philistines, there's been no altercation as of yet. They're just jockeying for position. They're shouting at one another and trying to intimidate each other. They've taken their positions on the battlefield but no battle has really broken out. All that's happening is Goliath keeps coming out and taunting the Israelites and defying the army of Israel (and defying God ultimately) – vs. 10.

And this is where we see God bringing everything together so perfectly. This is one of those divine appointments. David ends up being at just the right place, talking with his brothers as Goliath speaks out. God is leading David's life so wonderfully.

- David could have complained to his Dad about having to bring all these things to his brothers, but he just willingly goes. David had this servant heart. But in the background of it all, God was leading David to bring him from the shepherd hills to the battleground.
- We never know how God is leading us. That very task or duty you might be frustrated with could very well be what God is using to bring you from point A to point B to accomplish His purposes. That's why we must remember that whatever you do, do it all unto the Lord and for His glory. You never know what He is doing through it all.
- Obedience positions you to where God wants you to be.

17:25-27 - *So the men of Israel said, "Have you seen this man who has come up? Surely he has come up to defy Israel; and it shall be that the man who kills him the king will enrich with great riches, will give him his daughter, and give his father's house exemption from taxes in Israel."* ²⁶ ***Then David spoke to the men who stood by him, saying, "What shall be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?"*** ²⁷ ***And the people answered him in this manner, saying, "So shall it be done for the man who kills him."***

Saul was unwilling to go out on behalf of Israel so he tries to get out of it by sweetening the pot. Saul offers 1) great riches, 2) his daughter in marriage, and 3) exemption from taxes for his father's house. This is pretty lucrative. But none of these things are very appealing if you think you're just going to get stepped on by Goliath. You're not going to enjoy those tax breaks if you're squashed to smithereens.

Lesson #3: Walking by faith will bring ridicule from others.

2. The Inspiration of God's Faithfulness – 17:28-39

17:28 - *Now Eliab his oldest brother heard when he spoke to the men; and Eliab's anger was aroused against David, and he said, "Why did you come down here? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the*

wilderness? I know your pride and the insolence of your heart, for you have come down to see the battle.”

Eliab begins to criticize David. Eliab wasn't so much revealing David's heart as he was revealing his own heart. Eliab, saw the faith and courage in David, and the lack of courage he had, and begins to attack him, almost mocking him:

‘You're just caring for a few sheep David, better go back and tend to your small little responsibility.’

- Sometimes when we step out in faith we'll have our detractors and critics, almost mockers, because if they're not walking in faith, your actions will seem foolish to them. Sometimes they're mocking simply because they're convicted of their lack of courage. It's often the cowardly people of God who are the biggest obstacles to the mission of God.
- It's good to have counsel from others, but be sure that counsel comes from godly people who are walking by faith. Be discerning because you will need to wade through the criticisms to know what is of God or not. Don't let others drown out the leading of God.

David wisely answered back...

17:29-31 - *And David said, “What have I done now? Is there not a cause?”*

³⁰ Then he turned from him toward another and said the same thing; and these people answered him as the first ones did. ³¹ Now when the words which David spoke were heard, they reported them to Saul; and he sent for him.

David saw that there was a cause, a reason to feel the way he did. There was a need to step out in faith. He saw what was being done and what was being said against God and His people, and David was ready to do something about it.

You gotta love this guy.

So word got back to Saul and Saul sends to have David come to him.

17:32-33 - *Then David said to Saul, “Let no man's heart fail because of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine.” ³³ And Saul said to David, “You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for you are a youth, and he a man of war from his youth.”*

This is so awesome, here's small fry David telling big King Saul, don't lose heart over this giant, I'll go and shut him up.

How does a guy like Saul deal with this? That would be hard to hear. So like Eliab, Saul tries to discourage David. He doesn't want to be shown up by some kid.

But notice what David does, he's going to draw on previous experiences; past episodes of God's faithfulness to fuel him on in faith to fight this giant...

Lesson #4: Remembering God's past faithfulness fuels present confidence.

17:34-37 - *But David said to Saul, "Your servant used to keep his father's sheep, and when a lion or a bear came and took a lamb out of the flock, ³⁵ I went out after it and struck it, and delivered the lamb from its mouth; and when it arose against me, I caught it by its beard, and struck and killed it. ³⁶ Your servant has killed both lion and bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, seeing he has defied the armies of the living God." ³⁷ Moreover David said, "The Lord, who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine." And Saul said to David, "Go, and the Lord be with you!"*

I love that David recalled God's past faithfulness. That's something that may have helped Saul and the rest of the Israelites when they're hearing the taunts of the enemy. Remember what God has already done! That gets faith working. David remembered how God has already protected him and enabled him to take down ferocious beasts. Goliath will be just like one of those. This isn't David being confident in himself, or over zealous in faith, this is David knowing that God brought previous victories and can do it again here.

As David said, ***'The Lord, who delivered me... will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine'*** (17:37).

You know, through these different seasons of life David could have easily thought, why is this happening to me? How come I'm getting stuck with the shepherding duties? Why am I putting my life in jeopardy with animals attacking? But we don't see him whining or complaining. We see him serving. He's doing it all unto the Lord. And little does he know that God is training him for greater responsibilities. He's learning how to trust the Lord. And he's given opportunity to see God be His defense. As David remained faithful it was preparing him for greater things God had in store for him.

- Every trial and difficulty we go through are opportunities to prepare us for greater things God has for us.
- And each test of faith allowed David's faith to grow, to where he could confidently say, ***'this Philistine will be like one of them'*** (17:36).

Lesson #5: Our spiritual battles are not won through fleshly means.

17:38-39 - So Saul clothed David with his armor, and he put a bronze helmet on his head; he also clothed him with a coat of mail. ³⁹ David fastened his sword to his armor and tried to walk, for he had not tested them. And David said to Saul, "I cannot walk with these, for I have not tested them." So David took them off.

Saul was trusting in outward things to bring victory. But funny how he couldn't trust them for himself. David couldn't even walk in these as they weren't designed for him. It's important that as we go into battle for the Lord we remember that we are not wrestling against flesh and blood, but that we also don't try to fight in another man's armour. It's sad when Christians try to move forward through worldly techniques and tactics. This is not how God has equipped us. We need to go forth in faith!

Lesson #6: God gets greater glory when the odds seem impossible.

3. The Implementation of God's Power – 17:40-58

17:40 - Then he took his staff in his hand; and he chose for himself five smooth stones from the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag, in a pouch which he had, and his sling was in his hand. And he drew near to the Philistine.

Some say he took 5 stones because Goliath had 4 brothers. David didn't want to take down one giant but the whole family of giants. But also, 5 is the Biblical number of grace. David would know that this victory would not come through his might or effort, but through the grace of God.

17:41-44 - So the Philistine came, and began drawing near to David, and the man who bore the shield went before him. ⁴² And when the Philistine looked about and saw David, he disdained him; for he was only a youth, ruddy and good-looking. ⁴³ So the Philistine said to David, "Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?" And the Philistine cursed David by his gods.

44 And the Philistine said to David, “Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field!”

David appeared before Goliath like some kid who's never put in a hard day's work. Goliath is almost offended that this is who comes out to represent Israel. But David wasn't coming to represent Israel only, he was coming to represent God. David saw that God's reputation was at stake in this battle and it caused him to step up and be used of the Lord.

Lesson #7: The battle belongs to the Lord.

17:45-47 - Then David said to the Philistine, “You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. 46 This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you and take your head from you. And this day I will give the carcasses of the camp of the Philistines to the birds of the air and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. 47 Then all this assembly shall know that the Lord does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's, and He will give you into our hands.”

David comes fighting in the name of the Lord. He came as a representative of the Lord, he was linked to the Lord of hosts. This is different than fighting with the name of the Lord. Coming ***in the name of the Lord*** implies you're in fellowship with Him. (Psalm 118:10-11)

David speaks out in faith. He's laying it all on the line for all to hear. It's one thing to attempt something, but to say this is what's going to happen is something all together different.

- Do we have this kind of faith and confidence when we're battling the giants in our life? Do we say, I hope I can conquer this today, or do we say, today the Lord will deliver you into my hand!

The Lord does not save with sword and spear... When we find ourselves in a pickle we often times look for the natural solutions, how can I get myself out of this, or get myself through this? But God doesn't work through conventional methods or means. He does not save with sword or spear. Yet it's often the thing we will first reach for to alleviate our problem.

- Chuck Smith said, “Satan is always trying to draw us into that arena where we are in the flesh combating him. And if he can get you into the flesh, he can really give you a battle. I mean, he can wipe you out.”
- But the minute you come against the enemy in the Lord's means, he's defeated. He stands no chance against you. **1 Corinthians 1:27** says, “*God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty.*” And so Satan sees David coming with five stones and a sling, and he thinks, ‘*Great! David must be trusting in God because this is outlandish, and only God can get credit for something like this.*’
- When we come against the enemy in the Lord's way, we will be victors, because it's not us fighting, but God fighting for us!

17:48-49 - *So it was, when the Philistine arose and came and drew near to meet David, that David hurried and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine. ⁴⁹ Then David put his hand in his bag and took out a stone; and he slung it and struck the Philistine in his forehead, so that the stone sank into his forehead, and he fell on his face to the earth.*

David didn't just sit back and wait for the Lord to do the work, he got out there and ran to the enemy. He began to swing his sling. That's often what God wants to see in us – taking steps of faith. And then He will take care of the rest. He'll be sure to straighten that path, He'll be sure to direct that stone to kill the giants in the way. I believe that God caused that stone to land right where it was supposed to. We don't have to worry about our accuracy or aim, God sometimes just wants us to launch it and let Him do the rest.

As Goliath was going down, someone yelled to him, ‘*Did you ever think you could be taken out with a sling and a stone?*’ Goliath with his last breath responded, ‘*Such a thing has never entered my head before.*’

17:50-51 - *So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, and struck the Philistine and killed him. But there was no sword in the hand of David. 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.*

David made sure the enemy was destroyed and dead. We can't give sin any chance to be resuscitated and revived. It needs to be killed off completely.

And notice the Philistines fled. The deal was that whoever won, the other army would become their servants. Never enter into a pact with the devil expecting him to live up to his promises – He is the father of lies.

17:52-58 - *Now the men of Israel and Judah arose and shouted, and pursued the Philistines as far as the entrance of the valley and to the gates of Ekron. And the wounded of the Philistines fell along the road to Shaaraim, even as far as Gath and Ekron. ⁵³ Then the children of Israel returned from chasing the Philistines, and they plundered their tents. ⁵⁴ And David took the head of the Philistine and brought it to Jerusalem, but he put his armor in his tent. ⁵⁵ When Saul saw David going out against the Philistine, he said to Abner, the commander of the army, “Abner, whose son is this youth?” And Abner said, “As your soul lives, O king, I do not know.” ⁵⁶ So the king said, “Inquire whose son this young man is.” ⁵⁷ Then, as David returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, Abner took him and brought him before Saul with the head of the Philistine in his hand. ⁵⁸ And Saul said to him, “Whose son are you, young man?” So David answered, “I am the son of your servant Jesse the Bethlehemite.”*

Wasn't David already playing music for Saul. How then did Saul not seem to know him? It's quite possible that Saul knew David, but wasn't too familiar with his family background. Especially after promising his daughter in marriage to the one who defeated Goliath. Saul now takes interest into David's background.

This is a beloved and familiar story. But one thing we often do with these stories is we interject ourselves as the hero in the story. We begin to look at David's life and actions and think, this is what I must do. I need to stand up against the giants in my life. I need to slay these things by faith. I need to conquer over the enemy. Though there's a slight truth to some of this, we are not the hero of the story! Jesus is David and you are not!

- We are like cowering Israel overcome by the threat of the enemy. There's nothing we can do to defeat it. We need someone to save us from our giant of sin. We needed a representative to step forward and provide victory on our behalf. This is what Jesus has done for us.

David serves as a type for Christ, embodying how God raises unlikely leaders to confront evil and fulfill His divine mission. Just as David fought Goliath not only

for Israel but in the name of the Lord, Jesus triumphed over sin and death for humanity, revealing God's ultimate plan for redemption.

Taken from David Guzik:

David won a great victory, but not greater than the victory Jesus won on our behalf. David's victory over Goliath is a "picture in advance" of the victory Jesus won for us.

- i. Both David and Jesus represented their people. Whatever happened to the representative would happen to God's people also.
- ii. Both David and Jesus fought the battle on ground that rightfully belonged to God's people, ground that they had lost.
- iii. Both David and Jesus fought when their enemy was able to dominate the people of God through fear and intimidation alone.
- iv. Both David and Jesus were sent to the battleground by their father (17:17).
- v. Both David and Jesus were scorned and rejected by their own brethren.
- vi. Both David and Jesus fought the battle without concern with human strategies or conventional wisdom.
- vii. Both David and Jesus won the battle, but saw that their enemies did not give up willingly.
- viii. Both David and Jesus fought a battle where the victory was assured even before it started.

When we understand the Object of our faith, our faith increases. Our faith is in Christ. He's defeated the enemy. We've been delivered by His grace. We have nothing to fear. So let us go in the confidence of a David, which was ultimately confidence in the Lord. Let us remember that if God is for us, who can be against us (Romans 8:31)!