

1 Samuel 17
September 25, 2022

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: When you see a giant circumstance in your life that looks overwhelming to you, what motivates you to take it on? [Let people engage]

Transition: The story of David and Goliath is so familiar to us and carries with it many practical lessons for the Christian life. All of us face giants of one kind or another, and when we do, the initial reaction tends to be “It can’t be done.” However, this text will teach us that we may overcome them through the power of God. Let’s begin.

BOOK:

David and Goliath

17 Now the Philistines gathered their forces for war and assembled at Socoh in Judah. They pitched camp at Ephes Dammim, between Socoh and Azekah. ² Saul and the Israelites assembled and camped in the Valley of Elah and drew up their battle line to meet the Philistines. ³ The Philistines occupied one hill and the Israelites another, with the valley between them.

⁴ A champion named Goliath, who was from Gath, came out of the Philistine camp. He was over nine feet tall. ⁵ He had a bronze helmet on his head and wore a coat of scale armor of bronze weighing five thousand shekels (125 lbs); ⁶ on his legs he wore bronze greaves, and a bronze javelin was slung on his back. ⁷ His spear shaft was like a weaver’s rod, and its iron point weighed six hundred shekels (15 lbs). His shield bearer went ahead of him.

⁸ Goliath stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, “Why do you come out and line up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not the servants of Saul? Choose a man and have him come down to me. ⁹ If he is able to fight and kill me, we will become your subjects; but if I overcome him and kill him, you will become our subjects and serve us.” ¹⁰ Then the Philistine said, “This day I defy the ranks of Israel! Give me a man and let us fight each other.” ¹¹ On hearing the Philistine’s words, Saul and all the Israelites were dismayed and terrified.

¹² Now David was the son of an Ephrathite named Jesse, who was from Bethlehem in Judah. Jesse had eight sons, and in Saul’s time he was old and well advanced in years. ¹³ Jesse’s three oldest sons had followed Saul to the war: The firstborn was Eliab; the second, Abinadab; and the third, Shammah. ¹⁴ David was the youngest. The three oldest followed Saul, ¹⁵ but David went back and forth from Saul to tend his father’s sheep at Bethlehem.

¹⁶ For forty days the Philistine came forward every morning and evening and took his stand.

¹⁷ Now Jesse said to his son David, “Take this ephah (3/5ths bushel) of roasted grain and these ten loaves of bread for your brothers and hurry to their camp. ¹⁸ Take along these ten cheeses to the commander of their unit (1,000). See how your brothers are and bring back some assurance (some token or spoils) from them. ¹⁹ They are with Saul and all the men of Israel in the Valley of Elah, fighting against the Philistines.”

²⁰ Early in the morning David left the flock with a shepherd, loaded up and set out, as Jesse had directed. He reached the camp as the army was going out to its battle positions, shouting the war cry. ²¹ Israel and the Philistines were drawing up their lines facing each other. ²² David left

his things with the keeper of supplies, ran to the battle lines and greeted his brothers. ²³ As he was talking with them, Goliath, the Philistine champion from Gath, stepped out from his lines and shouted his usual defiance, and David heard it. ²⁴ When the Israelites saw the man, they all ran from him in great fear.

²⁵ 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.”

²⁶ 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?”

²⁷ They repeated to him what they had been saying and told him, “This is what will be done for the man who kills him.”

²⁸ 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.”

²⁹ “Now what have I done?” said David. “Can’t I even speak?” ³⁰ He then turned away to someone else and brought up the same matter, and the men answered him as before. ³¹ What David said was overheard and reported to Saul, and Saul sent for him.

³² David said to Saul, “Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him.”

³³ Saul replied, “You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a boy, and he has been a fighting man from his youth.”

³⁴ But David said to Saul, “Your servant has been keeping his father’s sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, ³⁵ I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. ³⁶ Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God. ³⁷ The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.”

Saul said to David, “Go, and the LORD be with you.”

³⁸ Then Saul dressed David in his own tunic. He put a coat of armor on him and a bronze helmet on his head. ³⁹ David fastened on his sword over the tunic and tried walking around, because he was not used to them.

“I cannot go in these,” he said to Saul, “because I am not used to them.” So he took them off. ⁴⁰ Then he took his staff in his hand, chose five smooth stones from the stream, put them in the pouch of his shepherd’s bag and, with his sling in his hand, approached the Philistine.

⁴¹ Meanwhile, the Philistine, with his shield bearer in front of him, kept coming closer to David. ⁴² He looked David over and saw that he was only a boy, ruddy and handsome, and he despised him. ⁴³ He said to David, “Am I a dog, that you come at me with sticks?” And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. ⁴⁴ “Come here,” he said, “and I’ll give your flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field!”

⁴⁵ David said to the Philistine, “You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. ⁴⁶ This day the LORD will hand you over to me, and I’ll strike you down and cut off your head. Today I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. ⁴⁷ All those

gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD's, and he will give all of you into our hands."

⁴⁸ As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him. ⁴⁹ Reaching into his bag and taking out a stone, he slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell face down on the ground.

⁵⁰ So David triumphed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone; without a sword in his hand, he struck down the Philistine and killed him.

⁵¹ David ran and stood over him. He took hold of the Philistine's sword and drew it from the scabbard. After he killed him, he cut off his head with the sword.

When the Philistines saw that their hero was dead, they turned and ran. ⁵² Then the men of Israel and Judah surged forward with a shout and pursued the Philistines to the entrance of Gath (a valley) and to the gates of Ekron. Their dead were strewn along the Shaaraim road to Gath and Ekron. ⁵³ When the Israelites returned from chasing the Philistines, they plundered their camp. ⁵⁴ David took the Philistine's head and brought it to Jerusalem, and he put the Philistine's weapons in his own tent.

⁵⁵ As Saul watched David going out to meet the Philistine, he said to Abner, commander of the army, "Abner, whose son is that young man?"

Abner replied, "As surely as you live, O king, I don't know."

⁵⁶ The king said, "Find out whose son this young man is."

⁵⁷ As soon as David returned from killing the Philistine, Abner took him and brought him before Saul, with David still holding the Philistine's head.

⁵⁸ "Whose son are you, young man?" Saul asked him.

David said, "I am the son of your servant Jesse of Bethlehem."

Process Observations/Questions:

Q: What did you most like about this passage? What resonated with you? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you least like about this passage? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you find in this passage that you didn't understand? [Let people engage]

Q: What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? [Let people engage]

LOOK:

The practical lesson here is that God gives victory in response to our faith. God had tested David privately with a lion and a bear; now he was to test him openly with a giant. If we are faithful in the private battles, God will see us through the public testings. Too often God's people faint at the smallest test that comes their way, little realizing that the "little tests" are but preparation for the bigger battles that are sure to come (Jer. 12:5).

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament (1 Sa 17). Victor Books.

III. The Victorious Soldier (17)

The story of David and Goliath is familiar and carries with it many practical lessons for the Christian life. All of us face giants of one kind or another, but we may overcome them through the power of God. Goliath was probably ten feet tall, with armor weighing over 150 pounds. He was “the Philistine” (17:8), their great champion, and so terrifying was he that he threw the Jewish army into panic (v. 11). Had Saul been a godly leader, he would have claimed Deut. 20 and led his army to victory; but when people are out of fellowship with God, they can only lead others into defeat.

David arrived with provisions for his brothers, and immediately he was interested in the challenge of the giant. Note that his own brethren accused him and tried to discourage him; Satan always has somebody to tell us “It can't be done.” Even Saul tried to dissuade him: “You are not able” (v. 33, NKJV). Well, in himself, David was not able, but in the power of the Lord he could overcome any enemy. (See Phil. 4:13; Eph. 3:20–21.) Saul tried to give David some armor, but since he had not proved it, David refused the armor. Imagine Saul telling somebody else how to have victory! David had proved the power of God privately in the fields caring for his sheep; now he would demonstrate this power publicly to the glory of God. Note how throughout this entire episode, David gives glory to the Lord. The practical lesson here is that God gives victory in response to our faith. God had tested David privately with a lion and a bear; now he was to test him openly with a giant. If we are faithful in the private battles, God will see us through the public testings. Too often God's people faint at the smallest test that comes their way, little realizing that the “little tests” are but preparation for the bigger battles that are sure to come (Jer. 12:5). David used simple, humble weapons: a sling and five stones (see 1 Cor. 1:27–28 and 2 Cor. 10:3–5). David knew how Gideon was given victory with weak weapons, and he knew that Gideon's God was not dead. Neither his brothers' criticism nor Saul's unbelief kept David from trusting God for victory. The stone hit its mark; the giant fell down, and David used the giant's own sword to cut off his head! This one victory opened the way for Israel to attack the Philistines and spoil their camp. “And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith” (1 John 5:4, NKJV). We are “more than conquerors”!

There is also a typical lesson here, for David is a picture of Jesus Christ. David's name means “beloved,” and Christ is God's beloved Son. Both were born in Bethlehem. Both were rejected by their brethren. (Of course, when David became king, his brethren received him, just as the Jews will receive Christ when He returns to reign.) David was anointed king years before he was permitted to reign, just as Christ is King now but will not reign on earth until Satan is banished. King Saul typifies Satan in this present age; for Saul was rejected and defeated, yet permitted to reign until David came to the throne. Satan is permitted to persecute God's people, yet one day he will be defeated.

Just as David was sent by his father to the battlefield, so Christ was sent by the Father to this world. Goliath illustrates Satan in his pride and power. Read carefully Luke 11:14–23. Satan is the strong man guarding his goods (people under his control), and Christ is the Stronger Man who overcomes him. Christ invaded Satan’s kingdom, overcame his power, took his armor, and now is dividing his spoils by saving lost souls and making them children of God. This is what David did that day: he overcame the strong man and allowed Israel to divide the spoils (vv. 52–54). We Christians do not simply fight *for* victory, we fight *from* victory, the victory won at the cross (Col. 2:15). “Be of good cheer,” said Jesus, “I have overcome (John 16:33).”

Why Saul did not recognize David, his own armor bearer, is not made clear. It is likely that he saw David when under the influence of the evil spirit. Another factor is that David would be but one of several servants at the court, and it would not be unusual for Saul to confuse them. Since Saul had promised his daughter to the victor, he would certainly ask about the boy’s family.

Merrill, E. H. (1985). *1 Samuel*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 448-449) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books

c. David’s triumph over Goliath (chap. 17)

17:1–51. Sometime after David commenced his role of court musician, Israel was again in peril at the hands of **the Philistines**. The armies were drawn up on opposite sides of **the Valley of Elah**, a few miles southwest of Jerusalem (vv. 2–3). Apparently intimidated by each other, they decided that the outcome should be determined by a contest of champions who would engage each other in combat. **The Philistines** offered **Goliath**, a giant (about 9’9” tall!), but Israel could find no one worthy, not even **Saul** (vv. 4–11). Goliath **wore a bronze helmet** and **a coat of scale armor** weighing **5,000 shekels**, that is, about 125 pounds, and **bronze greaves**. He was armed with **a bronze javelin**, and a long **spear** with a 15-pound **iron tip!** (v. 7) At last **David** heard of the dilemma and, having been sent to the **camp** of **Israel** with provisions for his **brothers** (vv. 12–22), begged **Saul** to let him take on **the Philistine** (vv. 23–32). Reluctantly **Saul** agreed and **David**, armed only with his confidence in God, a **sling**, and **five smooth stones**, slew Goliath and brought back his severed **head** in triumph (vv. 33–51).

17:52–58. When the conflict was over, **Saul** inquired as to the identity of the young warrior and learned that he was David, **son** of Jesse (vv. 55, 58). Why could not Saul recognize David, who had already served him for some time as musician and armor-bearer? One answer is that Saul was not asking who David was but for the first time was curious about David’s family connections: **Whose son is that young man?** (v. 55; cf. v. 25) When David himself was interrogated he did not say, “I am David,” but only, **I am the son of your servant Jesse of Bethlehem** (v. 58). Another and perhaps better solution is that David’s previous service had been brief and intermittent and now several years had passed since Saul had last seen him. If, for example, David had been only 12 years old when he came as Saul’s musician and had stayed off and on for only a year or so, he might have been 17 or 18 by the time of the Philistine episode and no longer recognizable to Saul. This view is strengthened by the fact that after David joined himself to Saul this time, the king “did not let him return to his father’s house” (v. 15; 18:2). This implies that David’s previous tenure had not been permanent. In any event, one need not posit two sources for chapters 16 and 17 or view the accounts as irreconcilable.

Mathews, K. A. (1998). *The Historical Books*. In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), *Holman Concise Bible Commentary* (p. 115). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

David Defeats Goliath (17:1–58). The Philistines were at war with Saul. Their greatest champion, Goliath (who stood over nine feet tall) taunted the Israelites for their cowardice. In ancient times it was common for champions of opposing armies to face off in a personal duel. No Hebrew had the courage to face Goliath.

Jesse's older sons were in the battle lines, and Jesse sent David to the field with provisions. David heard the defiant words of Goliath and was zealous to defend the name of the Lord by challenging the giant to combat. With the weapons of a lowly shepherd but armed with the power of God, he killed Goliath, and the Philistines scattered in defeat.

The stunning victory caused Saul to inquire of Abner, the captain of Israel's army, about the lineage of David. Since David was already in the service of Saul, the inquiry of Saul and his address to David seem out of place. Some scholars have suggested that the two accounts of David's introduction to Saul come from separate sources. This conclusion is reasonable, but this does not mean that the stories are two garbled accounts of the same event. Since Saul would reward David with his daughter in marriage, David's lineage became particularly important. Saul, therefore, investigated David's background anew.

Philbeck, B. F. (1972). *1 Samuel*. In H. F. Paschall & H. H. Hobbs (Eds.), *The Teacher's Bible Commentary* (p. 172). Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers.

The passage—A second account of David's introduction to Saul is found in the story of David's victory over Goliath. In this account David was present on the field of battle, not because he was Saul's armor bearer, but because he was bringing his brothers provisions from home. Until the time of his victory, he appears to have been unknown to Saul (v. 58); but through his newfound prominence, he became a close friend of Jonathan who immediately secured him a place in Saul's court (18:2).

The battle took place in the valley of Elah, one of the major passes from the Philistine plain up into the highlands of Judah. The two armies had retired to defensive positions on opposite sides of the valley, and neither commander was willing to surrender the advantage of height to carry the battle to the enemy. In the stalemate which followed, the Philistines were gaining a psychological advantage through their gigantic warrior who daily challenged the Israelites to individual combat.

Israel's champion was far from the untried boy envisioned by many modern readers. He may have lacked experience in the use of military weapons (vv. 38–39), but he was a strong and experienced fighter (vv. 34–36). Putting aside the normal battle garb, he selected ammunition for his sling from the bed of a stream: five stones, each about the size of a man's fist. With this formidable weapon, he felled the Philistine giant. Using Goliath's own sword, David beheaded his enemy, thus confirming the Israelite conviction that the Lord and not the force of arms determines the outcome of battle (v. 47). Unnerved by the unexpected defeat of their champion, the Philistines became easy prey for the jubilant Israelites.

The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). (1 Samuel 17). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

© 2022 Lee Ann Penick