

The Life of David

David and Goliath—Part 3

1 Samuel 17:41-58

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Scripture

In our sermon series on “The Life of David” I want to conclude the story today of “David and Goliath.”

The Philistines gathered their armies for battle against Israel in the Valley of Elah. But, instead of the two armies slugging it out, the Philistines put forward a champion named Goliath of Gath. He proposed that whoever lost the battle would result in his side becoming the servants of the victor’s side. The obvious champion for Israel was King Saul, but he would not go out against Goliath. In fact, no one from Israel would battle against Goliath. No one, that is, until young David came to the battle field. David was shocked to hear Goliath’s defiance. He volunteered to go against Goliath. King Saul was initially reluctant, but eventually relented and allowed David to go and battle against Goliath. So, with the Philistine armies on one hill and the Israelite armies on the other hill, David went with staff in hand to the brook and chose five smooth stones. Then he went into the Valley of Elah to fight against Goliath. This sets the scene for the battle.

Let’s read about David and Goliath in 1 Samuel 17:41-58:

⁴¹ And the Philistine moved forward and came near to David, with his shield-bearer in front of him. ⁴² And when the Philistine looked and saw David, he disdained him, for he was but a youth, ruddy and handsome in appearance. ⁴³ And 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 The Philistine said to David, “Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the

birds of the air and to the beasts of the field.”⁴⁵ Then David said to the Philistine, “You come to me with a sword and 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 down and cut off your head. And I will give the dead bodies of the host of the Philistines this day to the birds of the air and to the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel,⁴⁷ and that all this assembly may know that the Lord saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the Lord’s, and he will give you into our hand.”

⁴⁸ When the Philistine arose and came and drew near to meet David, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine.⁴⁹ And David put his hand in his bag and took out a stone and slung it and struck the Philistine on his forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell on his face to the ground.

⁵⁰ So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and struck the Philistine and killed him. There was no sword in the hand of David.⁵¹ Then David ran and stood over the Philistine and took his sword and drew it out of its sheath and killed him and cut off his head with it. When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled.⁵² And the men of Israel and Judah rose with a shout and pursued the Philistines as far as Gath and the gates of Ekron, so that the wounded Philistines fell on the way from Shaaraim as far as Gath and Ekron.⁵³ And the people of Israel came back from chasing the Philistines, and they plundered their camp.⁵⁴ And David took the head of the Philistine and brought it to Jerusalem, but he put his armor in his tent.

⁵⁵ As soon as Saul saw David go 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 And the king said, “Inquire whose son the boy is.”⁵⁷ And as soon as David returned from the striking down 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?” And David answered, “I am the son of your servant Jesse the Bethlehemite.” (1 Samuel 17:41-58)

Introduction

One couple in our church family, who shall remain nameless, recently asked me when I was going to get to the actual battle between David and Goliath. With tongue in cheek the wife said, “My money is on the big guy!”

Of course, the odds makers in Philistia—and even in Israel—had all their money on the big guy too. After all, Goliath was nine feet nine inches tall and he was a seasoned warrior. Opposing him was David, probably still a teenager, whose resume included shepherding and playing the harp. Everyone who looked at the upcoming battle between Goliath and David would have said that it was a terrible mismatch.

Lesson

But in today’s lesson, in 1 Samuel 17:41-58, we learn that God raises up a savior against those who defy him.

Let’s use the following outline:

1. The Boasting of Goliath (17:41-44)
2. The Response of David (17:45-47)
3. The Victory of David (17:48-54)
4. The Inquiry of Saul (17:55-58)

I. The Boasting of Goliath (17:41-44)

First, let's look at the boasting of Goliath.

First Samuel 17:40 says that David “took his staff in his hand and chose five smooth stones from the brook and put them in his shepherd’s pouch. His sling was in his hand, and he approached the Philistine” in the valley between the two armies. Verse 41 says, **“And the Philistine moved forward and came near to David, with his shield-bearer in front of him.”** I wonder if Goliath thought that David was the shield-bearer to the champion who would follow him. I mean, David was so small in comparison to the giant Goliath.

But, when no other champion stepped onto the battlefield, **and when the Philistine looked and saw David, he disdained him, for he was but a youth, ruddy and handsome in appearance** (17:42). Interestingly, what Goliath saw was what Samuel saw when he anointed David as the future king over Israel, “Now he was ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome” (16:12).

But, of course, what Goliath saw incensed him. He just saw David’s staff in his hand. In fact, David looked like a shepherd and not like a battle-hardened soldier. So, **the Philistine said to David, “Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?”** (17:43a). I was struck by the fact that in this entire text that we are examining today the author never refers to Goliath by name; he is simply **“the Philistine,”** perhaps to highlight his opposition to Jehovah, the living God of Israel. In fact, **the Philistine cursed David by his gods** (17:43b), probably Dagon (5:2) and Ashtaroth (31:10). This really was the true confrontation: the gods of the Philistines versus the God of Israel, the false gods versus the true and living God, Jehovah.

Then, **the Philistine** boasted and **said to David, “Come**

to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and to the beasts of the field” (17:44). Goliath boasted that he would make mincemeat of David and feed him to the animals. Any one of us facing an almost ten-foot giant would be quivering and quaking in our boots. But, not David.

II. The Response of David (17:45-47)

Second, let's note the response of David.

David was not afraid of Goliath. His trust was not in his own ability but his trust was in the Lord. We remember that David had earlier said to Saul, “The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine” (1 Samuel 17:37).

Then David delivered one of the great, classic speeches in the entire Bible. Notice three elements in David's response.

First, David rebuked the Philistine for blaspheming God. We read David saying to the Philistine in verse 45, **“You come to me with a sword and 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.”** Goliath, along with the entire Philistine army, was defying God. They viewed Israel's God as a tribal deity, something like one of their own gods, except that they believed their own gods—Dagon and Ashtaroth, most likely—were superior. But David rebuked Goliath for blaspheming the true and living God.

Second, David expressed his confidence in God's power to save. David said in verse 46a, **“This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head.”** As noted earlier, David's confidence was not in his own ability but, rather, his confidence was in the Lord. David knew that he was up against insurmountable odds. He could

never win in his own power and strength. But, his trust was not in his own ability but his trust was in the Lord.

And third, David announced his purpose in defeating the Philistine. David said in verses 46b-47, **“And I will give the dead bodies of the host of the Philistines this day to the birds of the air and to the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the Lord saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the Lord’s, and he will give you into our hand.”** David wanted the world to know that Israel’s God is the true and living God; he is no mere tribal or local deity. Furthermore, he wanted God’s people to know that the Lord saves not with sword and spear; in other words, God saves his people his way and not with the ways of the world. Finally, David reasserted that the battle is the Lord’s; that is, God is in sovereign control over all things, even battles with Philistines.

III. The Victory of David (17:48-54)

Third, let’s observe the victory of David.

Goliath had heard enough. He **arose and came and drew near to meet David**, and so **David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine. And David put his hand in his bag and took out a stone and slung it and struck the Philistine on his forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell on his face to the ground** (17:48-49). It took forty-seven verses to get to this point, and it took only three short sentences to describe the victory of David over Goliath.

The author of First Samuel wanted his readers to be sure that they did not miss the significance of what happened. And

so he wrote in verse 50a, **“So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and struck the Philistine and killed him.”** And to make sure that no-one missed the point that David did not use the weapons of the world, he added, **“There was no sword in the hand of David”** (17:50b). Sometimes worldly weapons seem stronger and more powerful than God’s weapons, but that is not the case.

To make sure that Goliath was dead, **David ran and stood over the Philistine and took his sword and drew it out of its sheath and killed him and cut off his head with it. When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled** (17:51). Woah! Wait a minute! Didn’t the Philistines just renege on their agreement (which Goliath stated on their behalf in verse 9) to become Israel’s servants? Yes, they did! They hightailed out of the Valley of Elah as fast as they could. So, with that **the men of Israel and Judah rose with a shout and pursued the Philistines as far as Gath and the gates of Ekron, so that the wounded Philistines fell on the way from Shaaraim as far as Gath and Ekron** (17:52). Then, after having chased the surviving Philistines back into their own territory, **the people of Israel came back from chasing the Philistines, and they plundered their camp** (17:53).

David did not chase after the Philistines. Instead, verse 54 says, **“And David took the head of the Philistine and brought it to Jerusalem, but he put his [that is, Goliath’s] armor in his tent.”** As we read that verse we need to be aware that Jerusalem was not yet occupied by the people of God. The stubborn Jebusites still lived in Jerusalem, a lingering embarrassment to the people of God that they had not yet taken hold of every city in the Promised Land. This comment in verse 54 simply announced that David would one day in the future place the head of Goliath in Jerusalem when he conquered it (as we

read in 2 Samuel 5:6-7).

IV. The Inquiry of Saul (17:55-58)

And finally, let's note the inquiry of Saul.

We read in verses 55-56, **“As soon as Saul saw David go 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.’ And the king said, ‘Inquire whose son the boy is.’”**

Some scholars see a problem here in that Saul did not seem to know David. But, actually, Saul was not wanting to know who *David* was; he wanted to know who David's *family* was. You may recall that Saul had offered his own daughter to the one who killed Goliath and also make his father's house free in Israel (17:25). So, Saul was inquiring about his future in-laws.

So, as soon as **David returned from the striking down of the Philistine, Abner took him, and brought him before Saul with the head of the Philistine in his hand. And Saul said to him, “Whose son are you, young man?” And David answered, “I am the son of your servant Jesse the Bethlehemite”** (17:57-58). And thus Saul learned about David's family, about those who would become his in-laws.

Conclusion

Therefore, having analyzed David and Goliath as set forth in 1 Samuel 17:41-58, we should thank God for Jesus who is our Savior.

Three weeks ago, when I started this narrative I said that this story is often preached about David picking up five “smooth stones” to go into battle against Goliath (17:40). And

sermons are about defeating the “five Goliaths” we face; Goliaths such as fear, doubt, discouragement, and so on. But, dear friends, that is *not* the point of the text. While we may be able to draw some personal lessons from the text, the main thrust of *every* Old Testament narrative is to show us what God was doing in redemptive history to save his people. Or, to put it another way, Jesus is the main hero of the entire Bible. Everything in the Old Testament somehow points us to the coming Jesus, whereas everything in the New Testament somehow points us to the life and ministry of Jesus.

And we see that in a very clear way in our text. In his battle against Goliath, David used an expression in verse 45, when he said, “I come to you in the name of the Lord.” This unusual expression is only used one other time in the entire Old Testament. It is used in a Psalm in which the writer recounts that he was surrounded by nations opposed to the living God, and “in the name of the Lord [he] cut them off.” Later in that same Psalm, in Psalm 118:26a, he writes these words, “Blessed is he who *comes in the name of the Lord!*” In other words, “Blessed is God’s savior who comes in the name of the Lord to defeat our enemy.”

Psalm 118 is referenced a number of times in the New Testament. It is particularly referenced in each of the four Gospels as Jesus walked into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. You remember the crowds repeatedly recited this verse on Palm Sunday. Matthew’s Gospel puts it this way, “And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David! *Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!* Hosanna in the highest!’ ” (Matthew 21:9)

Later in that week, as his death drew near, Jesus lamented over Jerusalem and said, “For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of

the Lord’ ” (Matthew 23:39).

David said to Goliath in the Valley of Elah, “I come to you in the name of the Lord” (1 Samuel 17:45). He was pointing us to his greater Son, Jesus, who has “come in the name of the Lord” and who will one day return and “come in the name of the Lord” again.

David defeated Goliath in the Valley of Elah. David’s greater Son, Jesus, defeated Satan on the cross at Calvary.

David represented the people of Israel when he defeated Goliath. David’s greater Son, Jesus, represented all the elect of God when he defeated Satan.

Oh, dear friends, David’s victory over Goliath points us to Jesus’ victory over Satan. Let us thank God for Jesus, who is our Savior.

And if Jesus is not yet your Savior, unite yourself to him. If you are not united to Jesus, you are presently united to Satan.

You may ask, “How do I unite myself to Jesus? How can Jesus become my representative?” You unite yourself to Jesus by repenting of your sin and trusting that Jesus is able to save your soul by defeating your enemy, Satan.

I urge you, if you have never done so, to do so today. Amen.

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and membership in his church family,
develop them to Christlike maturity,
equip them for their ministry in the church
and life mission in the world,
in order to magnify God's name.*

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