

David and Goliath: Getting Past the Story — Almost

1 Samuel 17

By [Dr. Derek W. H. Thomas](#)

Our help is in the name of the Lord who made the heavens and the earth. Let us worship God.

Lord Jesus Christ we crown you Lord of all. You are the King of kings and Lord of lords, the Maker of all that is, the Sustainer of everything in the created universe. In You we live and move and have our being. We join with angels and archangels and cherubim and seraphim to magnify the greatness of Your name, that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow and tongue confess that He is Lord of all. Holy Spirit, we pray that You would come down among us. Help us to worship You in spirit and in truth. Heavenly Father, we come to You leaning on the everlasting arms of our Savior by the strength of the Holy Spirit. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we worship You, our one true and living God. Bless us now we pray. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

This is a wonderful story of David and Goliath and it's hard to know where to break it, but I'm going to read the entire chapter. Chapter 17 of 1 Samuel; 1 Samuel chapter 17 and you'll find it in your pew Bibles on pages 239 to 241. Before we read it together, let's look to the Lord in prayer.

Father, we thank You again for the Scriptures and we pray now for Your blessing. We ask for the illumination of the Holy Spirit that we might read, mark, learn and inwardly digest for Jesus' sake. Amen.

This is God's holy, inerrant Word:

Now the Philistines gathered their armies for battle. And they were gathered at Socoh, which belongs to Judah, and encamped between Socoh and Azekah, in Ephes-dammim. And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered, and encamped in the Valley of Elah, and drew up in line of battle against the Philistines. And the Philistines stood on the mountain on the one side, and Israel stood on the mountain on the other side, with a valley between them. And there came out from the camp of the Philistines a champion named Goliath of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span. He had a helmet of bronze on his head, and he was armed with a

coat of mail, and the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of bronze. And he had bronze armor on his legs, and a javelin of bronze slung between his shoulders. The shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron. And his shield-bearer went before him. He stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, 'Why have you come out to draw up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not servants of Saul? Choose a man for yourselves, and let him come down to me. 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.' And the Philistine said, 'I defy the ranks of Israel this day. Give me a man that we may fight together.' When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid.

Now David was the son of an Ephrathite of Bethlehem in Judah, named Jesse, who had eight sons. In the days of Saul the man was already old and advanced in years. The three oldest sons of Jesse had followed Saul to the battle. And the names of his three sons who went to the battle were Eliab the firstborn, and next to him Abinadab, and the third Shammah. David was the youngest. The three eldest followed Saul, but David went back and forth from Saul to feed his father's sheep at Bethlehem. For forty days the Philistine came forward and took his stand, morning and evening.

And Jesse said to David his son, 'Take for your brothers an ephah of this parched grain, and these ten loaves, and carry them quickly to the camp to your brothers. Also take these ten cheeses to the commander of their thousand. See if your brothers are well, and bring some token from them.'

Now Saul and they and all the men of Israel were in the Valley of Elah, fighting with the Philistines. And David rose early in the morning and left the sheep with a keeper and took the provisions and went, as Jesse had commanded him. And he came to the encampment as the host was going out to the battle line, shouting the war cry. And Israel and the Philistines drew up for battle, army against army. And David left the things in charge of the keeper of the baggage and ran to the ranks and went and greeted his brothers. As he talked with them, behold, the champion, the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name, came up out of the ranks of the Philistines and spoke the same words as before. And David heard him.

All the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him and were much afraid. And the men of Israel said, 'Have you seen this man who has come up? Surely he has come up to defy Israel. And the king will enrich the man who kills him with great riches and will give him his daughter and make his father's house free in Israel.' And David said to the men who stood by him, '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?' And the people answered him in the same way, 'So shall it be done to the man who kills him.'

Now Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spoke to the men. And Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, 'Why have you come down? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your presumption and the evil of your heart, for you have come down to see the battle.' And David said, 'What have I done now? Was it not but a word?' And he turned away from him toward another, and spoke in the same way, and the people answered him again as before.

When the words that David spoke were heard, they repeated them before Saul, and he sent for him. And David said to Saul, 'Let no man's heart fail because of him. Your servant will go and fight with this Philistine.' And Saul said to David, 'You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him, for you are but a youth, and he has been a man of war from his youth.' But David said to Saul, 'Your servant used to keep sheep for his father. And when there came a lion, or a bear, and took a lamb from the flock, I went after him and struck him and delivered it out of his mouth. And if he arose against me, I caught him by his beard and struck him and killed him. Your servant has struck down both lions and bears, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, for he has defied the armies of the living God.' And David said, '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.' And Saul said to David, 'Go, and the Lord be with you!'

Then Saul clothed David with his armor. He put a helmet of bronze on his head and clothed him with a coat of mail, and David strapped his sword over his armor. And he tried in vain to go, for he had not tested them. Then David said to Saul, 'I cannot go with these, for I have not tested them.' So David put them off. Then he 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.

And the Philistine moved forward and came near to David, with his shield-bearer in front of him. And when the Philistine looked and saw David, he disdained him, for he was but a youth, ruddy and handsome in appearance. 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. 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.' 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. 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, 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.'

When the Philistine arose and came and drew near to meet David, 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.

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. 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. 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. And the people of Israel came back from chasing the Philistines, and they plundered their camp. And David took the head of the Philistine and brought it to Jerusalem, but he put his armor in his tent.

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.' 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. And Saul said to him, 'Whose son are you, young man?' And David answered, 'I am the son of your servant Jesse the Bethlehemite.'

So far, God's holy, exciting Word.

A man falls over a cliff, plummets down. On the way down, manages to grab hold of a branch of a tree. Below him are several hundred feet and racky rocks. He shouts, "Is anyone there?" and God says, "I'm here. Do you believe?" And the man says, "Yes." And God says, "Then you have nothing to fear. Put your trust in Me. Just let go of the branch." There's a long silence and the man says, "Is there anybody else there?"

Faith

That's what this chapter's principally about, David's faith in the living God. He

casts himself on the promises of God.

What's this story about? What is this story really about? Is it about courage, human bravery against all odds? It's about one man's courage against a giant. Who's your giant? Maybe that tenth grade bully. Maybe that chump of a boss. Maybe it's inside your head — the Ego and the Id Freud might have said — a battle against guilt and self-esteem. Is that what this passage is about? And some people say, “No, that's not what this passage is about. That's to demean the passage, that's to bring the passage down to moralisms.

This passage is about a battle that one man took from which the rest profited. David won the battle and Israel is saved. David's victory is imputed and reckoned to Israel. This is about Jesus. This story's not really about David and Goliath or David's faith, it's about Jesus. David is a type of Jesus.”

You see, if that's what this passage is about, it reduces Old Testament narrative to fantasy literature. No, these things were written for our instruction. The author of Hebrews tells us in chapter 11 about the faith of Abraham and Jacob and Joseph and Rahab and Moses and David. David trusted in the Lord and what David did, he did in union with his Savior, and you and I are meant to read these stories and see for ourselves an example of a man with faith in God, faith in the living God. And I want this morning to draw out some lessons, four of them, as time permits - four lessons from this very familiar story.

I. Man looks at the outward appearance.

The first of which is — Are you guilty of looking at the outward appearance and drawing all of your conclusions from what you can see. Why do I say that? Because that's what God has said in the previous chapter. 1 Samuel 16 and verse 7: “Man looks at the outward appearance; God looks at the heart.” He said that when David was being chosen as the successor to Saul. Samuel had preferred Eliab. Eliab was the eldest son. He was a handsome, tall, strapping fellow, and God says to Samuel, “Don't look at the outward appearance, look at the heart.” This is the next story.

It's a story about men looking at the outward appearance. What did they see? Goliath, a giant. He was nine foot six. That's tall. Some of you saw in the papers this week a picture of the tallest and shortest men in the world in 2010. It was taken by the Guinness Book of Records. I think it was taken in London. The smallest man was from China I think and the tallest man was from Turkey. His name was Sultan Kosen. He's eight foot one. He's the tallest man in the world in 2010 according to the Guinness Book of Records. There have been taller men than this one, but he is the tallest man in the world today.

He was tall. Goliath has armor that weight one hundred twenty six pounds. The

head of his spear weighed sixteen pounds. The men of Israel looked at this man and they were terrified. They looked at the outward appearance, what they could see, and they drew conclusions. We are always doing that, you and I. We draw conclusions from what we can see. We estimate a person by their looks, what school they've gone to — have they gone to the right college, the right university — which side of the tracks did they grow up, how much money do they have. We make those judgments all the time according to outward appearance.

And this story is saying to us, “If you judge by outward appearance, you’re not judging in the way God judges.” God judges the heart, and this story is about David's heart. He has a heart for God. Boy, does he have a heart for God.

Where is your heart this morning? Do you have a heart that beats passionately for God? You see, I don't know what your outward appearance judgment may be this morning. When cancer calls, you see the outward appearance and you make a judgment. Or when you lose your job, when the Dow Jones plummets through the floor, you make judgments according to outward appearance.

I asked my brother Don Breazeale before the service started if I could say this and he said, yes, I could. Some of you all remember when Missye Rhee went to be with Jesus. I cited at the funeral from her diary, the day when she discovered she had cancer. Do you remember what she said? “God has given to me a gift.” Breathtaking, staggering — took my breath away when I read it. She didn't judge by outward appearance, she judged in a God-ward direction. That's what this story is saying to you this morning — are you judging purely by outward appearance?

II. Are we moved by the honor of God?

Well, secondly, it's saying something else — Are we moved by the honor of God? Are we moved by the honor of God? What is it that gets to David? This chump, this Goliath, who's defying the armies of Israel in the name of his gods, taunting them, mocking them. It's the fact that he is mocking God in so doing. He's saying to the armies of Israel that “Your God is of no value to you” and it got to David. It got to him so much that he didn't care what the cost or the consequence would be, he was going to defend the honor and the integrity of God.

What do you do if you watch a movie — now don't tell me you don't, because I know you do — what do you do when you watch a movie and the name of Jesus is taken in vain? I've watched perfectly good, decent movies, but there's always that one sentence, they put it in their deliberately to up the ratings because of it. They don't want it to be a general movie; they want it to have some kind of restriction because apparently they make more money that way. What do you do when that happens? Do you just let it pass by? The name of Jesus, that you sang, that you and I sang at the opening of this service this morning — “Crown

Him, crown Him Lord of all!" Does it get to you? Does it disturb you? Are you bothered by it when the integrity, when the honor of Jesus is taken in vain? There's a cost to maintaining the honor of God. There's a cost. Jesus says you must deny yourselves, you must take up a cross and follow Him because only as you lose your life will you gain it.

I think of Peter and John. Do you remember what the Sanhedrin said to them, Acts 4:5, immediately after Pentecost? They said to Peter and John, "You cannot preach in the name of Jesus anymore," threatening to cast them into prison and beat them. You know what Peter and John did? They preached in the name of Jesus. It was a command they could not obey because the honor of God, the integrity of the Gospel, was at stake. Let me ask you this morning, are you driven and moved by the honor and the integrity of God?

III. The role of faith.

There's a third lesson in this story and it's the role of faith — Are we encouraged, are we encouraged by God's acts of faithfulness to us in the past? Do you remember when David comes before Saul? Saul says to him, "David, you can't fight this Philistine. You're only a boy. Now this man has been a fighter all his life." Do you remember what David does? He tells him about what God had done in his life in the past, as a shepherd boy, fighting lions and bears. And if lion and bear turned against him, he would grab them by the beard and cut off their heads. Do you see what he's doing? He says, "God has helped me in the past. He can help me in the future." That's an important spiritual lesson. It's an important spiritual principle.

Let me illustrate it from a well-known hymn that we sing: "Yield not to temptation for yielding is sin. Each victory will help you some others to win." Each victory will help you some others to win — David is saying, "God has helped me in the past. On a scale of things, yeah this is probably bigger than anything I've faced before, but it's the same principle. It's no different in principle from facing a lion or a bear."

Now, where are you this morning? What is it that you're facing? What is the difficulty? What is the obstacle? What is the thing that frightens you, terrifies you, paralyzes you? Has God not helped you in the past? Can you not draw lessons from the past this morning — times when you found yourselves in difficulty, times when you found yourself paralyzed? And God came, and His Word came, and His promises came — upheld you, strengthened you, motivated you, challenged you, enabled you, put you on your feet again so that you're here this morning. You passed through many trials and many dangers and many difficulties in the past. Well I want to say to you this morning, He's the same God. God hasn't changed one iota. He's the same yesterday, today, and forever. He hasn't lost His ancient power. His promises are still of the same effect to you and to me as

they've always been. He has said to each one of us that He will never leave us nor forsake us. Are you encouraged by God's faithfulness to you in the past and are you using that to help you in the present?

IV. One with God is a majority.

But there's a fourth thing I want us to learn, a fourth principle, a fourth lesson if you like. Do you notice that everything about David speaks of weakness? He's a boy; he's a young man; he's a shepherd; he has a sling and some stones and this nine foot six giant is a war-machine. It's weakness against strength — weakness against strength. Eliab, his older brother — a lot of you know this if you have elder brothers. I have an elder brother. I know this. They sometimes look down on you. They speak from a level of pretentiousness. Eliab was doing that to David. Do you notice the way Eliab says, “With whom have you left those few sheep?” Did you notice that line? That's all David was fit for — to look after a few sheep. He even goes on to say there's evil in David's heart. Saul disbelieved him, Goliath is contentious of him.

It's weakness against strength.

Why?

Because as David so graphically puts it in this text — the battle, do you see, is the Lord's. This is not David's battle. This is not glorifying David. All the glory, all the honor here is God's.

Nate read from 1 Corinthians 3 this morning — “One sows, Paul, one waters, Apollos, but it's God who gives the increase.” It's the same principle. They said about the apostle Paul that he was weak. He didn't look very much. People said he was short, had a hook nose, that he wasn't very wise — he didn't speak like the Greek Sophists and philosophers. He didn't come, he says to the Corinthians, with the wisdom of the world, but with the wisdom of God, that all the glory might be given to the Lord. The battle my friends, the battle is the Lord's.

And there's a lesson here — Have we learned — here's the lesson — Have we learned that one with God is a majority? One with God is a majority. You know, David took what he had. He knew how to use a sling. That was his gift. That was his expertise. He knew how to use a sling. He gave it to the Lord. He said to the Lord, “Use what I've got. I give it to you. It's not much. It really isn't very much, but with You, it can become everything.” In weakness we are strong in the Lord. We may be weak in ourselves, we have no strength in ourselves, but with God on our side, in union and communion and fellowship with the Lord Jesus, we are princes. We are children of God. We are heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ. That's the perspective that David had.

A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing;
our Helper He amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing.
For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe;
his craft and power are great; and armed with cruel hate,
on earth is not His equal.

Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing;
were not the right man on our side, the man of God's own choosing.
Dost ask who that may be! Christ Jesus, it is He,
Lord Sabaoth His name, from age to age the same,
and He must win the battle.

That's the perspective. The battle is the Lord's. We come with empty hands and we say, "Lord, this is Your battle." That's what David is doing here. And I want to ask you this morning, have you learned that, that one with God is a majority?

Our Father, we thank You for this extraordinary story. Thank You for the way You use this young lad, David, to bring glory to Your name. We thank You for the way in which it reminds us that in weakness we are made strong in the Lord by the power of the Spirit and in union with Jesus Christ. Now bless us, we pray, because we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

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