

# 1 Samuel 17:31-54

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Date: 02 May 2013

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Again, the passage is 1 Samuel 17, 31-54. Please stand with me for the reading of God's Word. 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 rose 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.

[ 1 : 1 6 ] 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.

[ 2 : 2 6 ] 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 his sheath and killed him and cut off his head with it.

When the Philistine 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 Sheariah as far as Gath and Ekron.

[ 3 : 46 ] 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.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Good afternoon.

One of the challenges of preaching a passage like 1 Samuel chapter 17 is its familiarity. You say, well, Pastor Jay, David slays the giant.

End of story. Let's go home. Well, it's not as simple as that, is it? Last week in 1 Samuel 16, we were introduced to David.

The writer took us behind the scenes of Jesse's house where David was privately anointed by Samuel.

[ 4 : 50 ] Few people in that particular setting, if any of them, knew the real significance of that great anointing on that day.

The rushing of the Spirit of God, what a beautiful image that we saw there in chapter 16, verse 13, was an indication that the Lord indeed was with David, his servant, his anointed.

The scene shifts in chapter 17 from a private, you might even say court, king's court kind of setting, to a public one, a battlefield.

The scene changes, but the major players in the narrative do not change. Both Saul and David are in chapter 17.

You may say, well, Pastor Jay, what about Goliath? After all, doesn't our Bibles, our ESVs with the header start chapter 17 and say David and Goliath?

[ 6 : 03 ] My answer to, is it about Goliath? It's yes. It's a qualified yes kind of answer. Who among us, if you've been in Sunday school or been a part of the church for any length of time, hasn't heard this great narrative, one of the great, absolutely great narratives of Scripture that we have before us today?

Okay. The David and Goliath battle is classic. I mean, you even talk about the David and Goliaths of sports and the Davids and Goliaths of entertainment and the Davids and Goliaths of politics, huh?

It's classic. It's a picture that we know about. It's a picture that we're familiar with. The underdog wins. Not only that, but the profile of Goliath is legendary.

Look with me at chapter 17 and begin looking with me at verse 4 because that is actually where the profile begins. And there came out from the camp of the Philistines a champion named Goliath of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span.

The first thing that we see about Goliath is that he was a champion. A champion. That particular word is used three times in this chapter.

[ 7 : 37 ] The first one in verse 4. The last one in verse 51. And the champion in the last scene that we see him looks a lot different than when we first encounter him.

I mean, he's a live and boisterous kind of champion as we see in following verse 4. But in 51, well, he's a dead kind of champion.

In our vernacular, the word champion, it connotes a winner. A victor. The best in a particular class.

But here, in this particular passage, the word literally means the man of the middle. The man of the middle.

And this particular terminology was used to describe the person who had come forward from the front line and became a man in between the lines.

[ 8 : 34 ] In between the lines of the soldiers. One on one side. One on the other. Another. He's a challenger of sorts. A captain-like person.

Goliath was the Philistine champion. Height-wise, Goliath was mammoth.

His head was just a few inches below the standard basketball rim. Inches. Just a few inches below.

He was over nine feet tall. Add to his size the fact that his armor that he wore weighed about 125 pounds.

From head to toe. This man was a mass of metal. The head of his spear was 15 pounds alone. Talk about somebody sweating.

[ 9 : 32 ] Talk about a power kind of workout. Just try to work out in that. If you were to lose a few pounds. When we lived in Texas, my daughters were part of the cheerleading for the football teams.

I mean, in Texas, they start very early as far as in the football and the cheerleading. And they had a very memorable cheer. And some of you may be familiar with it.

Against the opponents, they wanted them to know that we are big. B-I-G-B-I-G-B-I-D. We're bad. B-A-D bad. And we're boss.

B-O-S-S. B-O-S-S. Boss. Huh? That was sort of like Goliath. Could have said the same thing. In addition to being big and bad in appearance, he was also dominant and defiant in his demeanor.

Notice the word in verse 10. And the Philistines said, I defy the ranks of Israel this day. Give me a man that we may fight together.

[ 10 : 42 ] And defy, or words in that particular group, are used five different times in the chapter. Verse 10, 24, 26, 36, and 45.

In verse 10, defying amounted to he was challenging them. He was calling them out. He was getting in their face in our terms.

Much like professional basketball or football players or boxers do, they get in the face of their opponent, egging them on and accenting, hey, I'm challenging you.

One of the keys to understanding this particular chapter is that we need to be reminded that the writer of the Samuel narratives, he is very, very fond of contrast.

We see this in chapter 1, where Hannah, this faithful, praying, longing to be a mother woman, is contrasted with an aged, insensitive priest, Eli.

[ 11 : 55 ] In 1 Samuel 2, we see the evil, faithless sons of Eli. They don't know the Lord. They're contrasted with Samuel, whom the Lord has begun to reveal himself to and to make himself known.

He would be the great prophet and judge of the nation. He would be the kingmaker anointing two of the kings, the first two kings of Israel. And here, in our chapter before us, while Goliath is indeed a member of the caste, the real focus is on Saul and David.

Because here in the text, they are leaders who are in contrast. Saul, in fact, as much as Goliath, is an antagonist in this particular narrative.

What he does or does not do is as harmful, or perhaps even more harmful, than what Goliath threatened to do to the people of God.

Leaders. Saul and David, in contrast. There was a leadership void there. And I would ask us on today, is there a leadership void in our day?

[ 13 : 12 ] How are we doing? Are we the kind of godly, faith-filled, visionary leaders?

Are we that kind of leaders? And are we producing those kind of leaders for our homes, for our churches, and other spheres of influence in our world?

Leaders who understand the times, and the issues and the forces that loom so very large in our world? Are we those kind of leaders?

Are we producing those kinds of leaders? We need discerning men and women who see beyond the physical realm to the philosophical and the spiritual forces that are among us.

And these forces today, with great force, are battling for our hearts and our minds. Brothers and sisters, we must not be intimidated by them.

[ 14 : 16 ] These big and brazen personalities, with well-articulated anti-God perspectives. You and I, through the power and the strength of God, must be forces that counter those kinds of people, those kinds of philosophies, those kinds of forces in our world.

Even as we represent God well, trust that the Lord would use us to fill those kinds of voids. As we look at Saul and David a little bit more closely in the chapter, here we see God's validation, yet another validation of David as his anointed.

Here, David, he emerges from the private life into public life. He goes from Bethlehem, as it were, to the battlefield.

And here, this particular narrative shows him as a capable, wise leader. He's a warrior in Israel's army. Before we look at David more closely, I really want us to take a look at Saul.

This is the reigning king of God's people that we're looking at. The response of Saul in Israel to Goliath is recorded in chapter, in verse 11 of our chapter.

[ 15 : 42 ] Look at that with me. When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, notice their response. they were dismayed and greatly afraid.

Look, look, look at verse 24 because there we see something similar. Though Saul's name is not mentioned, the men of Israel who followed him come into view.

All the men of Israel, when they saw the man, and indeed Goliath was the man, fled from him and were much afraid.

The interesting thing with this is that the people had desired a king because they had wanted someone to lead them out and to fight God's battles. We hear that in chapter 8 in verse 19.

This was their response to Samuel. No, but there should be a king over us that we may be like all the nations and that our king may judge us and not go before, and go out before us and fight our battles.

[ 17 : 01 ] Saul here was doing anything but that. That was not happening. If Goliath's strategy was one of intimidation and fear, it was working that day.

Against God's people. Look at verse 25. There, Saul's words or alleged words were repeated here in verse 25.

Look at it with me. The men of Israel said, Have you seen this man who has come up, and this was their words to David, 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.

These were the alleged words of a man who had reneged on his leadership responsibility. His incentive plan had not gotten anyone to sign up for.

[ 18 : 02 ] There were no takers up to this point. The plan represented, it was a creative plan, but it was a plan without real vision.

It lacked it. It failed to inspire any takers. Now we see Saul's actual words in verse 31.

Look at that with me. When the words that David spoke, that is, I'll go out and fight him, and they heard him about the inquiry, were heard, they repeated them before Saul, and he sent for him.

And notice David's words to Saul. Let no man's heart fail because of him. Your servant will go and fight this Philistine. Huh?

As Saul saw it, and then he comes up to David, verse 33, and Saul said to David, you are not able to go out against this Philistine to fight with him for you're but a youth.

[ 19 : 02 ] And he has been a man of war from his youth. As Saul saw it, David's age and experience were liabilities to keep him from going.

He was young. Goliath was a seasoned warrior. And so, Saul's next steps to put his armor on David too big.

The bottom line regarding Saul was this. He was without faith. He was without courage. And without vision.

Now, these are the essentials of a leader. Regardless of what sphere they might be in. Visionary leadership looks forward, they see this picture of this desirable future, and then they strategize in ways that move them and their organizations, those who follow them, forward in order to achieve that kind of vision.

But that's not all because the leadership is, as far as its vision, is multi-directional. Though a leader does not particularly focus on the rear-view mirror, nonetheless, he looks back because there are experiences in the past that have a way of leveraging one in order to move them forward, and such was the case with David.

[ 20 : 24 ] He was able to look back and see the hand of God in his life. That within itself was faith-inspiring for him. But one of the forgotten dimensions or directions of leadership, particularly as it relates to godly leaders, is that there are people who look up.

There's the vertical dimension because the first vision of a godly leader is that they see God. It is the Hebrews 11.27 kind of vision.

In that, speaking about Moses, he endured as seeing him who was invisible. How is your vision of God?

Because your vision of God will determine how you see any and everything else. Remember the spies in Numbers chapter 14? When they went back and they came out and they saw all of these giants, the Anakim in the land of Canaan, they saw all of that and they were discouraged because of what they saw on the horizontal plane.

And of course, Joshua and Caleb said, hey, we can do it because we have a vision of a God that is bigger and bolder and badder than any circumstance or any individual that we might face.

[ 21 : 51 ] How is your vision of God? David's vision of God was a 2020 vision of God. Huh? David's words and his actions, friends, contrasted so deeply and boldly with those of Saul.

The text enables us to see how the wise, faith-filled manner in which David handled the Goliath threat first in his interaction with Saul and his conversation with him and then in his interaction with Goliath.

Huh? Rather than being discouraged by the words of Saul not to go to battle with Goliath. David looked in the back of him in his rearview mirror at his experience of God as recorded in verse 34.

Look at verse 34. 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, I struck him and delivered it out of his mouth and he rose against me, I caught him by the beard and struck him and killed him.

Your servant has struck down both lions and bears. Notice plural. And this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them for he has defied the armies of the living God.

[ 23 : 23 ] Huh? Looking in his rearview mirror, he saw the hand of God in his experience and that within itself, friends, has a way of rallying us forward whenever it is that you might be faced with right now.

Just hit the rewind button a little bit and do a little tracking of God's hand of grace and mercy in your life. And we don't have to look very far, do we?

Huh? So upon seeing what God had done, this helped him in envisioning what the Lord would do.

He had already envisioned the outcome of the battle and we'll hear that as he speaks to Goliath. But he envisioned what was going to be.

Huh? In his interaction with Goliath in verses 41 through 49, David took with him a vision of victory.

[ 24 : 25 ] Huh? It was shaped by the history of God's grace and faithfulness and his confidence in what God was going to do. Huh?

He was being insulted and someone, the God that David had trusted in was being insulted by this Philistine giant and someone needed to defend the honor of God in the world.

Someone needed to represent God's interest in the world and that is what God's anointed was supposed to do. Turn back with me to chapter 2 and verse 10.

A key verse in the Samuel narrative. But I want you to really see this. We've looked at this before back in last summer. But I want you to see it because the vision of victory that David was saying was consistent with the prophetic words of Hannah.

Again, these are key verses in the entire Samuel narrative. But this is what it says beginning, I believe, in verse 9. Look with me. He will guard the feet of his faithful ones.

[ 25 : 38 ] But the wicked will be cut off in darkness. For not by might shall a man prevail.

The adversaries, listen to this, and we saw this also in 1 Samuel chapter 7 when Samuel led the people of God against Philistine forces back then.

But we also see this, it's going to happen in 1 Samuel chapter 17. The adversaries of the Lord will be broken to pieces. Against them he will thunder in heaven.

The Lord will judge the ends of the earth. He will give, listen to this, this is very relevant, he will give strength to his king and exalt the power of his anointed.

And that is exactly what we see in 1 Samuel chapter 17 in this battle. David, armed with what would be considered to be vastly inferior weapons.

[ 26 : 43 ] Here, a faith-filled David approached Goliath and from a human's vantage point, he was the underdog. Goliath saw him as a boy sent to do a man's job and he actually insulted David when he came.

Look at verse 43. Am I dog that you come to me with sticks? Huh? Goliath despised him and that he was a weak and youthful opponent.

Huh? In his mind he was saying, hey, this kid, he's out of his league. I mean, send me someone else with a little more meat on his bone and experience under his belt.

But, notice how David countered the words of the Philistine in verse 45. Then David said to the Philistine, you come to me with sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I come to you, notice this, he comes as the Lord's representative.

He comes in the name of the Lord of hosts, Yahweh Sabaoth, we've sung about it this morning, this afternoon, Lord Sabaoth, he is the God of the armies, God of hosts, is his name.

[ 27 : 55 ] Huh? The God of the armies of Israel, whom you have, and there's our word again, you've defied him. You may have thought you were defying the armies of Israel, but in reality, you're defying our captain, and you've defied him, you've disrespected him, you've insulted him, you've got in the wrong person's face.

Goliath countered, and then we see in these great verses 46 and 47, the question, why this victory?

was this a victory for, solely for Israel's sake? Was this for David's reputation?

Ultimately, look at verses 46 and 47, in David's words, 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, 1 Samuel chapter 2 verse 10, to the birds of the air and to the wild beasts of the earth, being defeated was an insult within itself, but the birds and the beasts eating on the flesh, that was a further insult, notice why, here's the purpose, that all the earth may know that there's a God in Israel, and secondly, that this assembly may know that the Lord saves not, he delivers, not with sword and spear, for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you, notice this vision, he saw it, he will give you into our hands, notice the plural, our hand, not simply

David, and David alone, he was the leader, the saving ways of our God, to spread the fame of God's name, his reputation in the earth, to the nations, and that those who were around that day would see on both sides, both Israel and the Philistines, the saving ways of our God, isn't that like God?

[ 30 : 09 ] Paul wrote these words in 1 Corinthians chapter 1, but God chose what is foolish in the world, to shame the wise, God chose what is weak in the world, in the world's eyes, to shame the strong, God chose what is low and despised in the world, even the things that are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, why?

So that no flesh would glory in his presence, huh? That's the nature of our God. God takes the weak, seemingly inconsequential kind of things in people, and we've seen it in biblical history, in world history, victory.

That's the nature of our God. That's the way it works. The victory of the Lord's anointed that day put God's saving work on display for the nations and for those on the battlefield to see the hand of God working in the midst of his people.

Don't you love this young man's confidence? Hear this youngster, I mean, you see him out on the field, if you're there that day, you might say, hey, what did this kid have for breakfast this morning?

Give me some of that, whatever he had, that's what I want. I mean, you see this guy navigating and working the way that he is, and he's a kid, he's a young man, perhaps like a college student in our day.

[ 31 : 43 ] I want what he has. David's words and his posture were so different, friends, from Saul. Saul was dull, sightless, or blind.

He was in a spiritual stupor of sorts, and hear this, he was more interested in self-preservation than the honor and the glory of God in this world.

Do any of those words describe you or describe us this afternoon? Dull? This is very ironic, I'm getting a little sweat in my eye.

Sightless? Self-preserving? Huh? In a spiritual stupor? Saul cowered behind the battle lines.

Well, if we expect for the Lord, the captain, to use us, I hear Jesus' words, I hear our captain say something like this, if any man, a woman, included, assumed, would come after me, in other words, what he said, if anyone would be my disciples, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

[ 33 : 22 ] Huh? Those are the words of our captain. We cannot do that as we hold on self-preservation, being blind in a spiritual stupor.

Huh? On the other hand, David was slinging hand. Can you imagine him? He approaches the giant with the following words. Look there.

I believe it's in verse 48. What did he do? He ran! Contrast! Saul is cowering behind the lines.

David runs! He runs! He takes the fight to the enemy. He runs toward the battle line to meet the Philistine.

The Philistines were these perennial enemies of God's people. It's actually if David was being empowered by a force that was bigger than himself, and he was.

[ 34 : 27 ] The spirit of God was on him. Chapter 16, verse 13. Picture this young man. His eyes are intently on Goliath. He puts his hand in the pouch. He pulls out one stone, puts it in the sling, whirls the sling around, releases it, it hits his target, the blow knocks him out, he goes up and finishes off the job with Goliath's own sword.

Oh, but something else is going on in the camp, friends. While these things are taking place, we're seeing a reversal of what we see earlier in the chapter.

The men, when seeing their man in between, the Philistines, they flee when they see that their champion is dead.

And not only that, but the Israelite armies, they take courage. These were the ones who earlier were dismayed and greatly afraid, but now they're on the offensive in pursuit of the enemy being rallied by God's anointed.

While you were in the Israelite army in that particular day, let me put it another way, if you were not in the Israelite army of that day, and you understood what was happening, and you are of age, you may have been ready to sign up that day, I want to be in that kind of army.

[ 36 : 03 ] Why was the difference? Why would there be a change in attitude? Because there was a leader in the house. The victory of the Lord's anointed that day was a victory for the nation, but more importantly, it was the Lord's victory.

God's That the earth may know that the Lord or Yahweh was indeed God. That the God of Israel is the God who saves.

We say, well, Pastor Jay, what do we take away from this particular text? This is one of these great narratives of scripture that we've heard so many times.

Well, of course, one popular approach to this chapter is to encourage the listener to be just like David. David was a giant slayer.

You need to rise up and slay the various giants that loom large in your life. Well, this is a faith-inspiring account, and we are faced with a lot of things in our lives that we need faith to move forward against them, do we not?



[ 37 : 13 ] David's faith indeed motivates us to trust the Lord for strength in the various challenges of life that you and I face on a daily basis. But to come away only with such things is to miss the point of this particular passage.

The victory of the Lord's anointed is really what comes into view in this text. David, through the power of God, leads the way, in the defeat of Israel's enemies by coming against them.

How does he do it? Not in his own power, not in his own strength, but he does it in the name of Yahweh, Sabaoth, the Lord of hosts.

He, in doing this, David emerges from the shadows of relative obscurity into the view of all of Israel, and they will see that God indeed is with David, that his hand is upon him.

And as the Lord's representative, David is jealous for God's honor in the world. And he fights and wins the Lord's battles, that all the world may know that there is in fact a God in Israel, a mighty God in Israel, who indeed saves.

[ 38 : 36 ] And his salvation is not with military might. Centuries later, friends, one would come into Jerusalem, mounted on a donkey, to the shouts of blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

He too was an unlikely hero. He was not supported by his brothers, but he, our Lord Jesus Christ, did battle with the enemy forces of his day, both human and demonic.

The Lord Jesus Christ was crucified in weakness, but in that weakness, he met God's demand against our greatest enemies, sin and death.

He then rose up triumphantly from the grave, and his foes were crushed beneath his feet, according to Colossians chapter 2. The Lord's salvation was then and now through our Lord Jesus Christ, was on display through his anointed.

Those who embraced the work of Christ, much like the Israelite soldiers of that day, they then joined him in advancing the Lord's kingdom in the earth, and that's your role and mine in this world.

[ 39 : 52 ] Jesus, God's ultimate anointed one, has done his work, has triumphed over sin, death, hell, and the grave, and he calls you and me today to follow him and so we're going to sing it in a bit, oh, church arise, and I pray that it would be a fresh rallying cry for you and me this afternoon.

Jesus, God's leader, and we long to follow his lead. oh, if you don't understand who he is, you need to understand because he's the kind of person that we want to say oh, I want to follow him.

He's the one that has gotten ultimate victory. I want to follow him. I want to be a part of his team, his army. He's the leader that is worthy of our allegiance, friends, even to the point of death and full surrender.

The call is for us, for you and me to rise and join him. The Lord does not use conventional means to bring about salvation.

He uses unconventional means, unconventional ways, ways perceived as silly and inferior to do his saving, delivering work.

[ 41 : 12 ] He used the weakness of death to bring about life. the despised broken one to make people whole. He uses brokenness to bring about wholeness.

He used death on a cross to bring life to the world. If you're not following him on today, we'd be glad to help you.

There's some leaders around who will be glad to answer your questions as to how to do that. But if you are following him, if yes, you are inspired by the Lord's anointed David, but even more so inspired by the Lord's anointed the Lord Jesus Christ.

Join us this afternoon after our prayer. We're going to sing and I want you to listen to the song even as you sing it and own it on this afternoon.

Let me pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for this great chapter that is before us and the contrast that we see between these two kings as it were.

[ 42 : 30 ] Oh God, ultimately the Lord's anointed in the passage mirrors the ultimate victory of you Lord Jesus and we thank you for this sneak preview of this gospel preview in the Old Testament to the very work of Christ and Lord may those of us who own you as Lord may those of us be rallied fresh and new oh God to follow you Lord in this our day following Christ our captain so spirit come and enliven us and strengthen us for the work that's before us we pray in Christ's name amen let's stand and sing together through