

1 Samuel 17:48-51 - The Substitute

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[0 : 00] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

Please turn in your Bibles to 1 Samuel chapter 17. It's going to be a familiar passage and story to all of us. I would say before I get started, it's a blessing to be back in this pulpit. I've And as Jeremy mentioned, my wife and I attended this church for many years. In fact, my mom still lives right up the hill. My wife's parents live right over there behind Randolph, so we call this area of town home. And Jeremy said that Valley Pres is a sister church. That's not quite accurate.

You're really our mother church. You helped plant us over seven years ago. So we'll bring greetings from our church at Valley. You're a daughter, lovely daughter, church out in Madison.

My wife and I first visited Southwood in 1993. And as we walked out of church that day, Lauren said to me, I don't know where you're going to church next week, but I'm coming back here.

I was 22 years old. I was newly married. And I decided that the smartest thing to say was okay. And so we stayed here for eight years. And all of our children were baptized here at this church.

[1 : 39] And it is kind of ironic. Your planting pastor, Barney Hayward, is actually preaching for me at Valley this morning. In short, my wife and I and our family love Southwood. It holds a special place in our hearts. And I'm thankful to Will for inviting me to come and preach today. The passage will be on your screen. But I also want you to have your Bibles out or your phones out. I'll believe that you're reading your Bible on your phones. If you do that, let me read this passage for us first.

It's the very end of a story that you know. I'm going to start in 1 Samuel 17, verse 48. It says, 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. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, I pray that you would put all distractions aside. Speak to us through your word today. Touch our souls. Change our hearts. Glorify your name. And point us to your Son, Jesus Christ, who is our Lord, our Savior, and our Redeemer. Amen.

So, David defeated Goliath. I can only imagine how many times you've heard this story. But what does it mean? Usually, the message you hear is, you can be like David.

David, you can slay the giant in your life. And that is a message of motivation for every giant that you face. And it's the message of motivation for any underdog everywhere.

Today, I'm going to tell you the exact opposite. The true message of David and Goliath isn't that you can be David. The true biblical, glorious, hopeful message is that you can't be David.

[4 : 42] And that is good news. Flip back a few pages to 1 Samuel 8. Israel's story is one of brokenness.

Especially after the judges, which is where this story fits. Israel was at a very low point. Samuel was their leader. Samuel was their leader. But the people demanded a king. And in 1 Samuel 8, verse 20, the people say, a king may judge us. And a king may go out before us and fight our battles.

We want a king. Well, eventually, Saul was chosen as their first king. One chapter over at the very beginning in 1 Samuel 9, verse 2, it describes Saul. It says, Saul was a handsome young man. In other words, Saul was the biggest, the best, and the baddest man of the land.

But over the next few chapters, he struggles to follow God. Eventually, although Saul stayed physically as the king, God removed him from his covenantal plan. And Samuel seeks out a new

king, eventually anointing David in chapter 16. But Saul remained on the throne, unaware of who David really was.

So we get to the next chapter, chapter 17, from where I read our passage earlier. The Philistines have gathered on one hill, and Israel is on the other hill. Two enemies ready to do battle. But instead of an all-out war, the Philistines offer a one-on-one duel to the death.

[7 : 09] Your best man against our best man, winner take all. The Philistines offered Goliath, a giant of a man whose body armor alone weighed 120 pounds. He stood six cubits and a span, somewhere between six foot nine and nine feet tall. And the Philistine giant challenged Israel 40 straight days with no response. When you read through this chapter, through these verses, the mere presence of Goliath dominates the storyline. There is one huge man in the way.

So, who should fight Goliath? Well, I just read a description of Saul, and it says he was a head taller than anyone in Israel. He was the biggest and the best and the baddest man of the land. And he was their king, someone who they expected to go out and fight their battles. This is what a king in Israel is supposed to do. Imagine the scene unfolding. One man calls out your whole nation, and no one responds for 40 days. In chapter 17, verse 8, this is what Goliath would say, Choose a man for yourselves and let him come down to me. Verse 10, I defy the ranks of Israel this day.

Verse 11, when Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid. Saul, hello? He's calling you out.

Don't lose this point. It's the key point to the whole story. Saul was supposed to fight Goliath.

Saul was supposed to fight Goliath. But Saul abdicates. He offers riches, freedom, power, and prizes galore.

[9 : 55] Even his own daughter. For anyone to take his place. Saul doesn't pray to God. God is not even mentioned.

All the way up until David arrives. So then David shows up. He's sent by his father to take supplies to his brothers and check out what's going on. David hears Goliath's taunts. David hears about the rewards.

So David offers to stand in Saul's place. He offers to be his substitute. To fight his battle that Saul should fight. To save his people.

And the king, a man a head taller than anyone else, agrees to let this younger, youthful teenager step into his spot.

Even without the crown, at that moment, David truly ascends to Israel's throne.

[11 : 13] And as you know the story, David slays the giant. And everyone who ever hears this story identifies with someone.

We always identify with David. Before defeating Goliath, David actually taunts him.

Verse 45. He says, I come to you in the name of the Lord. The Lord will deliver you into my hands. I will strike you down and I'm going to cut off your head.

And he does it. Trust. And that's our usual lesson. Trust in the Lord. Be brave and courageous.

And just like David, you can win those big battles in your life. You see, there's a big problem with that lesson.

[12 : 12] There is a Goliath in your life that you cannot defeat.

It's this thing called sin. And sin has given us a fatal wound. You might be able to defeat a broken home.

You might be able to defeat a bad marriage. Or a drug addiction. You might be able to strike down cancer. Or achieve that elusive college degree.

We all face challenges. And we all find inspiration in David. But you see, there's only one true Goliath.

And it actually dominates the biblical storyline. When you study a passage, you always have to put it in context. Sin dominates the biblical storyline.

[13 : 22] Sin separates us from God. And we cannot defeat it. You see, we make the mistake of always placing ourselves in David's shoes.

In actuality, we've got to put ourselves in Saul's shoes. The story isn't about David, the inspiration. It is about David, the substitute. We must remember that overall story of the Bible. That God promises a redeemer. He promises a substitute.

He promises someone to stand in our place. God promised Jesus. And all along the way, God gives us glorious illustration after illustration about what that looks like.

In the Old Testament, he gave us priests. Priests represent man to God. They offer sacrifices for sin.

[14 : 30] Jesus is the ultimate priest who offers himself. God gave us prophets. God's voice to man. Jesus was the one. Jesus was the one the prophets pointed to.

Prophet, priest, king. The king would go and fight the battle for the people. Be their representative. Be their substitute. David, the true king, steps into Saul's place and represents all of God's people. David's action as king points us to Christ. Christ fills the roles of prophet, priest, and king. Roles we cannot fill.

We can't follow Christ to the cross. He must go there in our place. So we can't look at this passage and say, I can be like David.

[15 : 38] We can't be the substitute. We can't be the redeemer. And we can't be the king. We need a substitute. A redeemer.

And a king. So that's the point of this passage. That's the gospel. And when David steps down into the valley to fight Goliath, he represents all of Israel.

When Christ died on the cross, he represents all of us. At the cross, Christ faced our Goliath. The sin that separates us from God.

The sin that causes death and misery. And he won. And because he won, we win.

A good way to look at it is this. We are not players in the game. We are fans. We wear our team logo around our neck.

[16 : 38] We carry the mark of baptism. Some of you may root for Alabama or Auburn or Manchester United or the Chicago Cubs.

Many of you know Bob Greenman. Bob Greenman has told me before that, you know, he's a huge fan of the Cubs. And he said, you know, anyone can have a bad century.

Millions of Cub fans have suffered for a long, long time. They aren't bandwagon fans.

It's lifelong, loyal, live-and-die fandom. And that's who we are. But we cheer from the stands.

We want to help our team win. We go to the games and we cheer really loud and try to intimidate the opponent. But we're not playing in the game.

[17 : 39] It's a very important part of this story, and I'm sure you remember it. When David offers to step in Saul's place, Saul did something really interesting. He tried to give him his armor.

He wanted to help David win. Here, here's my armor. Here's my helmet. Here's my sword. We want to help.

We think God needs our help. Saul believed David needed his help. But David didn't need any of his help.

Jesus doesn't need any of our help. The essence of salvation, which is promoted here and throughout Scripture, is that God does not need our help.

And frankly, that's a really hard thing for us to wrestle with. Some of you who are older than me would remember John Fogarty's song, Put Me In, Coach.

[18 : 48] We want to go into the game. We want to contribute. But we don't. And we can't. I have my youngest child, Catherine, is 12 right now.

When she was three, she says to me out in the playground one time, Daddy, I want to do the monkey bars all the way across on my own.

Now, I had my doubts, but I said, okay. So I lift her up and put her on that first rung. And I step away and I say, okay, go.

She just hangs there. And she says, Daddy, come here. So as I take a step towards her, her legs wrap around my head in a death clutch.

I can barely breathe. And then she starts going across. And when we get to the other side, she releases me from the jaws of death.

[19 : 54] And she steps onto the little platform and she yells, I did it! And I said, now, honey, you did a great job.

But why don't you do it next time without choking Daddy? And she looks at me and she says, well, I can't do it without you. I said, but you said on your own.

Yes, on my own with you. At the very end of verse 39, after Saul puts all this equipment on David, it says that David put them off.

God doesn't need our help. God saves you on his own, without you. And that is the best news.

The good news. That is the gospel. And all the buildup to the prize fight, it was over before it began. It was a total mismatch.

[21 : 03] As we read earlier, David slings a stone. He hits Goliath in the head. And Goliath dies. And then David draws his sword and cuts his head off.

It has to put Genesis 3 in our minds. In Genesis 3, God says that the Redeemer will crush the head of the serpent. Here, David crushes the head of Goliath with a stone, and then he chops it off for good measure.

This story has always been seen as David being the underdog. This victory was not an upset. God's chosen king, a man after God's own heart, he's going to win. It's guaranteed. So how should we apply this to our lives?

We should be reminded that every road leads to Jesus. Every path takes us to the cross.

[22 : 10] Every problem we face. Every circumstance we find ourselves in. And as we deal with things that are going on in our own lives, we must remember that we need a substitute.

That we cannot fight the Goliath of sin and death. And that Goliath causes all the misery and challenges we face. We got to go to the source.

We must see that we are actually Saul in this story. But we can.

We cannot be David, but we can. Because of Christ, because of his victory over our biggest giant, with his power in us, we can fight other giants.

We can fight failure and disappointment. We can fight illness and brokenness and struggles and sin that ensnares us.

[23 : 28] We can fight those things because he won. I always tell my congregation that salvation is free and it is costly.

Salvation is free to us. By grace you have been saved. It is costly to God.

He gave his only son to suffer and die for your victory. And it is costly to us in following Christ.

The only way we can do it is standing in the power of our substitute. In Christ we can.

His victory is ours. And we should never forget that. No matter what we are facing. So what do you face today?

[24 : 34] My advice to you, my plea to you, would be don't lean on inspiration. Don't look at David and say, I can do that.

Lean on the substitutes. If you fast forward many years later, if you flip in your Bibles all the way into 2 Samuel chapter 11.

If you read that chapter, you would see King David at his lowest point.

He has sinned terribly. He sleeps with another man's wife. And then to cover it up, he murders her husband.

We must remember this. David in his role of king pointed to Jesus. But he wasn't Jesus.

[25 : 36] He points us to him. So he also needed Jesus. In the next chapter, the prophet Nathan in chapter 12 calls out David's sin.

Look at chapter 12, verses 7 through 9. It says this. Nathan said to David, Right after that, David confesses his sin.

He comes to his senses. Like the prodigal son and the pig's sty. And then look at verses 13 and 14.

David said to Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord. And Nathan says to David, The Lord has put away your sin. You shall not die.

Nevertheless, Nevertheless, Because by this deed you have utterly scorned the Lord, The child who is born to you shall die.

[27 : 28] So the circle switches. David needs a substitute for his sin.

Please see this here in the Scriptures. Another pointing forward to our Savior, Jesus Christ. So God takes the firstborn son of Bathsheba.

We must remember that Solomon wasn't the firstborn son. David's firstborn son was his substitute. Never forget what Jesus is most popularly called. He was called the son of David.

Nathan declared right here in 2 Samuel, In order for David's sin to be put away, God would sacrifice the son of David.

[28 : 35] The Bible is not a how-to book. The Bible is a how-he book. How God created us.

How we broke that relationship. And how He comes and saves and redeems us. It's in every story. It's on every page.

If you want to conquer the giant, You don't need inspiration. You need the substitute. Jesus Christ. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, Heavenly Father, we thank You for Your Word.

Lord, I thank You for Your Gospel message and how it flows through every nook and cranny of the Scriptures. How You point to Your Son Jesus.

[29 : 37] How You use other illustrations and circumstances and people to show us the path to salvation. Lord, I thank You that You and You alone are the source of salvation, of redemption, of forgiveness.

Lord, I pray that we would live in light of Your Gospel message as we face any and every giant.

I pray that we would constantly be reminded that Jesus conquered the greatest giant. And that in Him, we have eternal life.

Life with Christ. And it's in His name we pray. Amen. For more information, visit us online at southwood.org.