

Bible Study January 31, 2023

1 SAMUEL 17 (AMPLIFIED VERSION)

Goliath's Challenge

¹ Now the Philistines gathered their armies for battle and were assembled at Socoh, which belongs to Judah; and they camped between Socoh and Azekah, in Ephes-dammim. ² Saul and the men of Israel were gathered together and they camped in the Valley of Elah, and assembled in battle formation to meet the Philistines. ³ The Philistines were standing on the mountain on one side and Israel was standing on the mountain on the other side, with the valley between them. ⁴ Then a champion came out from the camp of the Philistines named Goliath of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span. ⁵ He had a bronze helmet on his head, and wore a coat of scale-armor (overlapping metal plates) which weighed 5,000 shekels of bronze. ⁶ He had bronze shin protectors on his legs and a bronze javelin hung between his shoulders. ⁷ The [wooden] shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam; the blade-head of his spear weighed six hundred shekels of iron. And a shield-bearer walked in front of him.

When they had first approached the Promised Land, most of the Israelites had been afraid to enter because of the giants living there (Numbers 13:32-33). King Og of Bashan needed a bed over 13 feet long (Deuteronomy 3:11). Now Goliath, who was over nine feet tall, taunted Israel's soldiers and appeared invincible to them. Saul, the tallest of the Israelites, may have been especially worried because he was obviously the best match for Goliath. In God's eyes, however, Goliath was no different than anyone else.

⁸ Goliath stood and shouted to the battle lines of Israel, saying to them, "Why have you come out to draw up for battle? Am I not the Philistine and are you not servants of Saul? Choose a man for yourselves and have him come down to me. ⁹ If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will become your servants; but if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall become our servants and serve us."

An army often avoided the high cost of battle by pitting its strongest warrior against the strongest warrior of the enemy. This avoided great bloodshed because the winner of the fight would be considered the winner of the battle. Goliath had the definite advantage against David from a physical standpoint. But Goliath didn't realize that in fighting David, he also had to fight God.

¹⁰ Again the Philistine said, "I defy the battle lines of Israel this day; give me a man so that we may fight together."¹¹ When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid.

¹² Now David was the son of the Ephrathite of Bethlehem in Judah, named Jesse, who had eight sons. Jesse was old in the days of Saul, advanced in years among men. ¹³ His three older sons had followed Saul into battle. The names of his three sons who went to battle were Eliab, the firstborn; next, Abinadab; and third, Shammah. ¹⁴ David was the youngest. Now the three oldest followed Saul, ¹⁵ but David went back and forth from Saul to tend his

father's flock at Bethlehem. ¹⁶ The Philistine [Goliath] came out morning and evening, and took his stand for forty days.

Why would this go on for 40 days without one side attacking the other? They were camped on opposite sides of a valley with steep walls. Whoever would rush down the valley and up the steep cliffs would be at a disadvantage at the beginning of the battle and probably suffer great casualties. Each side was waiting for the other to attack first.

¹⁷ Then Jesse said to David his son, "Take for your brothers an ephah of this roasted grain and these ten loaves of bread and run quickly to the camp to your brothers. ¹⁸ Also take these ten cuts of cheese to the commander of the unit. See how your brothers are doing and bring back news of them. ¹⁹ Now they are with Saul and all the men of Israel in the Valley of Elah, fighting with the Philistines."

David Accepts the Challenge

²⁰ So David got up early in the morning, left the flock with a keeper, picked up the provisions and went just as Jesse had directed him. And he came to the encampment as the army was going out in battle formation shouting the battle cry. ²¹ Israel and the Philistines drew up in battle formation, army against army. ²² Then David left his provisions in the care of the supply keeper, and ran to the ranks and came and greeted his brothers. ²³ As he was talking with them, behold, the champion, the Philistine of Gath named Goliath, was coming up from the army of the Philistines, and he spoke these same words again; and David heard him.

²⁴ When the men of Israel all saw the man, they fled from him, and were very frightened. ²⁵ The men of Israel said, "Have you seen this man who is coming up? Surely he is coming up to defy Israel. The king will reward the man who kills him with great riches, and will give him his daughter [in marriage] and make his father's house (family) free [from taxes and service] in Israel."

²⁶ Then David spoke to the men who were standing by him, "What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and removes the disgrace [of his taunting] from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he has taunted and defied the armies of the living God?"

What a difference perspective can make. Most of the onlookers saw only a giant. David, however, saw a mortal man defying almighty God. And Goliath was a target too big to miss. David knew he would not be alone when he faced Goliath; God would fight with him. He looked at the Israelite army's situation from God's point of view. Who or what are the "giants" you are facing? Viewing impossible situations from God's point of view helps us put giant problems in perspective. Once we see clearly, we can fight more effectively.

²⁷ The men told him, "That is what will be done for the man who kills him."

²⁸ Now Eliab his oldest brother heard what he said to the men; and Eliab's anger burned against David and he said, "Why have you come down here? With whom did you leave those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your presumption (overconfidence) and the evil of your heart; for you have come down in order to see the battle." ²⁹ But David said, "What have I done now? Was it not just a [harmless] question?" ³⁰ Then David turned away from

Eliab to someone else and asked the same question; and the people gave him the same answer as the first time.

David Kills Goliath

³¹ When the words that David spoke were heard, the men reported them to Saul, and he sent for him. ³² David said to Saul, "Let no man's courage fail because of him (Goliath). Your servant will go out and fight with this Philistine."

Criticism couldn't stop David. While the rest of the army stood around, he knew the importance of taking action. With God to fight for him, there was no reason to wait. People may try to discourage you with negative comments or mockery, but continue to do what you know is right. By doing what is right, you will be pleasing God, whose opinion matters most.

³³ Then Saul said to David, "You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight him. For you are [only] a young man and he has been a warrior since his youth." ³⁴ But David said to Saul, "Your servant was tending his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and took a lamb out of the flock, ³⁵ I went out after it and attacked it and rescued the lamb from its mouth; and when it rose up against me, I seized it by its whiskers and struck and killed it. ³⁶ Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, since he has taunted and defied the armies of the living God." ³⁷ David said, "The LORD who rescued me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine." And Saul said to David, "Go, and may the LORD be with you." ³⁸ Then Saul dressed David in his garments and put a bronze helmet on his head, and put a coat of mail (armor) on him. ³⁹ Then David fastened his sword over his armor and tried to walk, [but he could not,] because he was not used to them. And David said to Saul, "I cannot go with these, because I am not used to them." So David took them off. ⁴⁰ Then he took his [shepherd's] staff in his hand and chose for himself five smooth stones out of the stream bed, and put them in his shepherd's bag which he had, that is, in his shepherd's pouch. With his sling in his hand, he approached the Philistine.

⁴¹ The Philistine came and approached David, with his shield-bearer in front of him. ⁴² When the Philistine looked around and saw David, he derided and disparaged him because he was [just] a young man, with a ruddy complexion, and a handsome appearance. ⁴³ The Philistine said to David, "Am I a dog, that you come to me with [shepherd's] staffs?" And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. ⁴⁴ The Philistine also said to David, "Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the sky and the beasts of the field." ⁴⁵ Then David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword, a spear, and 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 taunted. ⁴⁶ This day the LORD will hand you over to me, and I will strike you down and cut off your head. And I will give the corpses of the army of the Philistines this day to the birds of the sky and the wild beasts of the earth, so that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, ⁴⁷ and that this entire assembly may know that the LORD does not save with the sword or with the spear; for the battle is the LORD's and He will hand you over to us."

⁴⁸ When the Philistine rose and came forward to meet David, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine. ⁴⁹ David put his hand into his bag and took out a stone and slung it, and it struck the Philistine on his forehead. The stone penetrated his forehead, and he fell face down on the ground.

David was able to move faster than Goliath because David carried no heavy weapons or armor. David was an expert marksman with a sling, and as he advanced on Goliath, he stayed out of range of Goliath's huge weapons. What made David effective, however, was more than his ability with a sling; it was his courage and his faith in God. To fight like David, we need David's kind of fearlessness. David had grown strong in his confidence by trusting God when he had encountered wild animals while guarding his father's sheep (17:34-37). When you face towering problems, recall how God has helped you in the past. Take heart because God gives you strength. Use the skills God has already given you and move forward.

⁵⁰ So David triumphed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, and he struck down the Philistine and killed him; but there was no sword in David's hand. ⁵¹ So he ran and stood over the Philistine, grasped 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 [mighty] champion was dead, they fled. ⁵² The men of Israel and Judah stood with a shout and pursued the Philistines as far as the entrance to the valley and the gates of Ekron. And the [fatally] wounded Philistines fell along the way to Shaaraim, even as far as Gath and Ekron. ⁵³ The sons of Israel returned from their pursuit of the Philistines and plundered their camp. ⁵⁴ Then David took the head of the Philistine and brought it to Jerusalem, but he put his weapons in his tent.

⁵⁵ When Saul saw David going out against the Philistine, he said to Abner the captain of the army, "Abner, whose son is this young man?" And Abner answered, "By your life, O king, I do not know." ⁵⁶ The king said, "Ask whose son the young man is." ⁵⁷ When David returned from killing [Goliath] the Philistine, Abner took him and brought him before Saul with the head of the Philistine in his hand. ⁵⁸ Saul asked him, "Whose son are you, young man?" And David answered, "I am the son of your servant Jesse of Bethlehem."

Although David had played his harp many times in front of Saul, Saul's question to Abner seems to show he didn't know David very well. Perhaps, since David was scheduled to marry Saul's daughter if he was successful (17:25), Saul wanted to know more about his family. Or possibly Saul's unstable mental condition (16:14) may have prevented him from recognizing David in a different context.