

**1 Samuel 17:1-58**

**SI:** Everybody knows the story of David and Goliath.  
But I would guess that most of us haven’t actually read it in a while.  
It’s a long story and I’m going to read the whole thing.

**INTRO:**

This week I typed “David and Goliath” in the Google search bar and hit the news button. Several recent news articles popped up. A sports story about a soccer match between two London teams—Sutton United and Arsenal. Article called it a David and Goliath match. An article about a documentary film maker trying to expose a big coal company for an environmental disaster. His efforts were referred to as a David vs. Goliath battle. There was an article in the New York Times. This was the headline: “How David became Goliath: The Secret of Israel’s Military Success.”

Everybody knows about the story of David and Goliath, right?  
It’s an inspiring story about how the little guy takes on the big man, how the underdog takes the fight to the bully and wins.  
We all identify with David.

I heard a graduation message once at a Christian school. The speaker told the seniors they were going to face Goliaths of every kind—spiritual Goliaths, emotional, academic, relational, and financial Goliaths—but through Christ they could be like David and bring those giants down. It was very inspiring.

Without a doubt, this is an inspiring story.  
But if inspiration is all you get out of it, if your takeaway is—  
This story pumps me up to face life, I’m going to be brave like David, I’m going to conquer the giants in my life like David, through Jesus of course, but I’m going to do it.  
If that’s the main thing, then you’re going to be disappointed.  
Because pretty soon your resolve and determination will fizzle out and the Goliaths you face will be just as strong and menacing as ever.

And here’s why: David and Goliath is not primarily an inspirational story. In fact, the Bible itself is not primarily an inspirational book.

It can and does inspire believers to do great things.  
But the first great purpose of the Bible is not to inspire us—  
it's to tell us we cannot save ourselves,  
God alone saves and Jesus Christ is the real hero of every story.

Jesus is the hero of the David and Goliath story and of every other Bible story—  
and Jesus is the hero of every episode and story in your own life.  
Jesus beats the Goliaths that you don't have a chance at beating.

And when you realize the David and Goliath story is actually about your hero Jesus  
winning the battles you could never win—when you realize that—  
the way is made clear for you to participate in Christ's victories.  
You start to reap the benefits of his accomplishments.

So let's look at this familiar story and we'll do so by asking two questions:

1. Who are you in the story of David and Goliath?
2. How do you participate in the victory of Jesus?

## **MP#1 Who are you in the story of David and Goliath?**

When you read it, where do you see yourself?

Our automatic response is to put ourselves in David's shoes.

We pull for David to win, we feel like we should be David or could be like him. It's not hard to imagine a children's Sunday teacher saying:

Boys and girls, David was a brave young person who trusted the Lord—and you must trust the Lord and be brave like David.

But look at the story itself. Until the moment David knocked Goliath down with the stone from his sling and beheaded him, until that moment, nobody was identifying with David, nobody wanted to be like him, nobody believed in him.

If you had been there that day, if I had been there—

We wouldn't have been cheering—Yes, there's our man. I want to be like him. At best, we would have been saying, Oh no. This is going to be a disaster.

Who are you in the story of David and Goliath? Who am I?

There are other shoes we are more likely to fill than David's.

**Like the Israelite soldiers.** How did they respond to Goliath's daily challenge?

It says they were dismayed and terrified.

That's a significant choice of words. Way back when the Israelites first crossed the Jordan River their leader Joshua told them they would face intimidating foes, but, he said, don't be dismayed and terrified.

The Lord has promised you this land. But they were dismayed and terrified.

There have been plenty of times I've been made decisions based on fear instead of the promises of God. I haven't witnessed to people because I've been afraid.

God promises his word will not return void, but I've been afraid.

Another thing about these Israelite soldiers—

Did you notice how they tried to motivate each other?

They kept telling each other: Remember what the king said—he'll give money and exemption from taxes and his own daughter to the man who kills Goliath.

They tried to motivate with materialism.

If there is enough in it for me, then maybe I'll do it. You ought to do it.

Once again, I've filled those shoes all too often. Making important decisions based on material concerns rather than spiritual ones. Advising other people that way.

By way of contrast, did you notice what happened when they tried to motivate David the same way? He didn't care about the money and the girl.

He was bothered nobody cared the armies of living God being defied.

There are some other shoes we might fill in this story.

I hope not, but I think we have to look honestly at ourselves.

**What about Eliab**, David's oldest brother?

How did he respond to the appearance of the Lord's anointed king?  
When David asked what was to be done about the Philistine,  
did Eliab cheer him on?

Did he say?: Little brother, I admit, I don't have it in me—  
but if you go out first, I'll follow you no matter what.  
Not at all. He was angry and dismissive.

I'm reminded of an incident that happened in the parking lot our Fla church.  
There was a church member, a woman, who had not been successful in romance  
she finally had a man and was telling the pastor about him.

The pastor, who was a very gentle, asked her if he was a believer.

And she said that he was not, but that she knew God wanted her to be happy.  
To which her pastor said:

You can't ever be happy as a Christian if you don't pursue holiness.

Boy that made her mad. And she let him have it.

She was facing a relational and emotional Goliath, but she did not want King Jesus  
to intrude. What does Jesus know about happiness and romance?

And I've done that too. I've been angry or dismissive of God's word.

Other shoes we might fill. **What about Saul?** Could we be Saul in this story?

Well, how did he respond to David?

At first glance it looks positive. He wasn't dismissive like Eliab.

But he says: You can't win like that, you need my armor.

The calling and conviction God has given you is not enough.

You need experience, equipment, and expertise if you're going to win.

The Lord rejected Saul as king because he did not have faith.

Here before him in the person of David is a shining example of faith—

but Saul doesn't say: Oh, now I see, it's all about trusting the Lord  
when we have to fight the giants in our lives.

In stead he says, Let's get real. Let's get practical.

I remember once someone came to ask me advice about something—  
came and sat in my study, my pastor's study.

But after the person left, it hit me like a ton of bricks—

I didn't say a single thing about Jesus Christ the whole time.

I gave lots of good advice. Here, try this piece of armor on.

I've done this and it's worked for me. I've found this to be practical.

I'm sure it was all ok, just like Saul's armor itself was fine.  
But how did David respond to the armor? I doesn't fit me.

The Lord will deliver me as he delivered me from the bear and the lion.  
God's been faithful to me in the past, he will be faithful to me in the future—  
now, relying on him, what does he want me to do?

One more set of shoes to possibly fill in this story—**Goliath's**.

Nobody identifies with Goliath. Even secular people who write news articles  
about David vs. Goliath soccer matches or court cases—  
they're always pulling for the David, not for the Goliath.

But what was Goliath's response to David? Contempt.

And contempt for Israel and Israel's God.

Now, I'm sure none of you have that view or you wouldn't be here.

But I want you to see something—

Goliath's contempt for David was just a revved up, unrestrained version  
of all those other responses to David from within Israel.

The Israelite soldiers who were motivated by materialism not faith—that's Goliath.

Eliab who was angry and dismissive—that's Goliath.

Saul who trusted practical solutions and human expertise—that's Goliath.

When we respond in any of those ways, it's like a little Goliath in our own hearts.

Nobody in this story comes off looking good, and if we had been there,  
we wouldn't have looked good either.

So who are we in this story? We are the people in need of a hero.

We need a hero who can do what we cannot do.

And here he is, the anointed king, the true king.

He doesn't look like much.

But he takes to the field and takes down the giant,  
and then all Israel participates in his victory.

So that brings us to the second question:

## **MP#2 How do you participate in the victory of Jesus**

See, this story is ultimately about Jesus. If you haven't gathered that already.  
All the great men and women of faith in the Old Testament foreshadowed

the Messiah in different ways.  
Some of them gave just a peek of who the Messiah would be,  
and others gave a more complete picture.  
But there is no other figure in the Old Testament who so fully foreshadowed  
Jesus Christ as David. He's the great prototype of the Savior to come.  
He's not simply a precursor of the Lord Jesus. He is the precursor.

Later in Samuel God makes a covenant with David and promises that  
on David's throne will sit an heir who will reign forever over God's people.  
Often the prophets, Ezekiel for example, refer to the coming Messiah—  
and they don't call him the son of David, they just call him David.  
Read the Psalms and you often find David saying about himself the very things  
that the Lord Jesus would later say about himself.  
David's whole life was an enacted prophecy foretelling the life and work of Jesus.

So what's the first thing David does as he steps on the pages of the Bible?  
He goes out and in the strength of the Lord and for the glory of the Lord  
and with unconventional weapons and with absolute faith—  
he strikes down a terrible enemy who no one in Israel,  
not even King Saul, had the guts or the ability to face.  
An enemy that was threatening Israel with a slavery and despair.

When Goliath shouted his challenge he said: Send me your champion.  
That's how we translate it in English.  
But the literal Hebrew translation is "man in the middle."  
Send me your man in the middle.

The man in the middle stands between the two people and the two destinies.  
That's what David did. He stood between the armies Israel and Philistia.  
He stood between two destinies—freedom or slavery for God's people.  
He wasn't just fighting for Israel, he was fighting as Israel.  
All of Israel's hopes for the future was on his shoulders.

And he won. We all know the story, but let's take some time to enjoy the details.  
When Goliath saw David—three things struck him—he was a boy, a youth.  
He was ruddy—most commentators say that means David was a redhead.  
And he was handsome.  
What an insult to Goliath.  
He wanted a worthy opponent, but who stepped out to fight him?  
A red-headed pretty boy.  
And what's this red-headed pretty boy carrying? A shepherd's staff.

Sticks, Goliath calls them. He's covered with bronze and iron—the latest and the best military technology.

Goliath sneers and says: Come here and I'll feed you to the animals.

David trash talks right back: You've defied the armies of the living God.

I'm going to strike you down, cut off your head, feed you and the Philistine army to the animals.

Goliath makes the first move and David charges him—

that's just what Goliath wanted, hand to hand combat.

But then David broke his stride, pulled out his secret weapon—his sling—

and put a stone in Goliath's forehead, dropped him, and then used his own sword to finish the fight.

There must have been a moment of shocked silence from both sides.

But then the Israelites—who up to that moment had been cowering and fearful—

let out a whoop and chased the Philistine army all the way back down the road.

Because the boy from Bethlehem, the son of Jesse had triumphed.

What does David's victory foreshadow?

The crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Jesus went out alone as our man in the middle. Stood between us and two destinies.

Life, happiness, freedom on the one hand, or slavery, despair and death on other.

The enemy was the terrible sin and selfishness in our own hearts and the supernatural, demonic evil allied against us.

And just as David used an unconditional weapon to surprise the enemy—

so did Jesus. He triumphed with the cross. He won with his own death.

Who would have ever thought of that?

And with his resurrection secured the victory and we get to participate in it.

Jesus didn't just die and rise for us, he died and rose as us.

We were on the cross, we came out of the tomb through union with him.

Theologians call this imputation.

Imputation is when the life and work of Christ is credited to you by faith in him.

That's how you participate in his victory—by trusting him, believing in him.

So the story of David and Goliath is a story of imputation.

Even though Israel's faith in their champion was very shaky—

he won and they got his victory.

And once you grasp that, the story of David and Goliath can inspire you.

I made a big deal at the beginning that this is not primarily an inspirational story. What I meant is that if you start with yourself—be brave, like David, be like Jesus—you're not going to get very far before you're thoroughly discouraged. But if you start with Jesus, all the mighty things he has done—and if you see that by faith his victory is imputed to you—then that's inspiring in the right sort of way. That can carry you along and make you brave and content in some tough situations—because you know the big victory has been won.

There's a quote from Bishop JC Ryle that's one of my favorites.

I've read it to you many times over the years.

Here's what he says Jesus Christ's victory does for the Christian person:

It enables him to feel that the great business of life is a settled business, the great debt a paid debt, the great disease a healed disease, and the great work a finished work; and all other business, diseases, debts and works are then by comparison small. It makes him patient in tribulation, calm under bereavements, unmoved in sorrow, not afraid of evil tidings, in every condition content; for it gives him a fixedness of heart. It sweetens his bitter cups; it lessens the burden of his crosses; it smoothes the rough places over which he travels; it lightens the valley of the shadow of death. It makes him always feel that he has something solid beneath his feet and something firm under his hands—a sure friend by the way, and a sure home at the end.

Bishop Ryle is not denying that there may be Goliaths in your life right now.

But they are, in comparison, small Goliaths.

Because David's greater Son has beaten the big one.

No matter what you are facing, take courage, have faith in Christ.

This short life of ours will be over soon and everything will be past and a glorious new life will dawn. Your troubles will be over.

Jesus has won. Even death cannot destroy you.

So here's how I want you to face your troubles this week.

Look at Jesus, look with eyes of faith at his amazing victory.

And then, like those Israelites, let out a whoop and a holler and chase all your little problems down the road.