

## The Life of David, Fear of God vs. Fear of Man, 1 Samuel 17:40-58, 1/19/25

Turn to 1 Samuel 17. Last week and this week we are learning how to overcome giants, like the giants of judgment, ridicule and rejection by being secured in God's Word. For David, God's voice, what God said about David, was bigger than the voice of these so-called giants. And the same can be true for us when we know and trust what God says about us in Christ.

But I left us on a cliffhanger just as David was about to face a very literal giant, Goliath. One of the things I love about our church is we have a variety of backgrounds here, and many people that didn't grow up in the church hearing these stories and are learning about David and Goliath for the first time. One guy said to me, "I've heard the phrase 'David and Goliath' many times but I had no idea it was from the Bible! What an amazing story!" And another woman emailed me to say that she was going to resist reading ahead in the story and can't wait to find out what happens today. So let's not keep them waiting! Before we get to the battle, we need to reexamine the context.

**1 Samuel 17:1-3** *Now the Philistines gathered their forces for war and assembled at Sokoh in Judah. They pitched camp at Ephes Dammim, between Sokoh and Azekah.*

**2** *Saul and the Israelites assembled and camped in the Valley of Elah and drew up their battle line to meet the Philistines.*

**3** *The Philistines occupied one hill and the Israelites another, with the valley between them.* In the heart of the land of Canaan is the region known as the Shephelah, a series of ridges and valleys connecting the Judean Mountains to the east with the wide, flat expanse of the Mediterranean plain. Let me show you a [MAP](#). And even today you can visit this spot [\[Picture\]](#) which is virtually untouched over 3000 years. This has been an incredibly important geo-political area, and a place where many battles have been fought. And here in the Valley of Elah most famously is when the Kingdom of Israel squared off against the armies of the Philistines, one of Israel's historic foes. The Philistines were from the Island of Crete, and they were known for two things- their worship of the fish-god, Dagon and their advanced and brutal warfare. The Philistines were a thorn in the side of the Israelites throughout their history. Well their goal this time was to capture the mountain ridge near Bethlehem and essentially to split Israel's kingdom in two. But here's the thing: God had given Israel the land of Canaan, the promised land. So the Philistines were not only opposing King Saul, they were opposing God himself.

**4** *A champion named Goliath, who was from Gath, came out of the Philistine camp.* This word champion literally means someone who stood in the middle. According to the ancient rules of war, armies could choose to send a representative to fight in the place of the whole army. This was a fairly common practice because there was often a high casualty rate on both sides, even the victors, and then the victors would be weakened and susceptible to a 3rd nation coming in to defeat them. But in this arrangement, the champion bears both the victory and the defeat of

the nation they represent. It's like the Olympics, when Simone Biles just smashes the competition and takes gold, all Americans get the gold, even though we are sitting on our couch eating ice cream and can't even do a cartwheel...she represents us. Except in this case, this was a fight to the death...everything is on the line, if the Philistines win, most of the Israel army would be slaughtered and the women and children would be taken into slavery. High stakes. And you can understand why this would have been the chosen battle strategy for the Philistines. They had the Hulk on their team. Look at his description. *His height was six cubits and a span.* That's 9'6"...and you say "Time out Nate, are we supposed to believe he was actually that tall?" Well the tallest man in modern history, **Robert Wadlow** of Illinois was recorded to be 8'11" and that was just in the last 100 years. So do I think this is possible, of course! There are other theories about Goliath as the last descendant of a race of giants, called Nephilim but if you really care e-mail me. *5 He had a bronze helmet on his head and wore a coat of scale armor of bronze weighing five thousand shekels; (125lbs)*

*6 on his legs he wore bronze greaves, and a bronze javelin was slung on his back.*

*7 His spear shaft was like a weaver's rod, and its iron point weighed six hundred shekels. (16lbs) His shield bearer went ahead of him.* Are we getting the picture? This already giant, hulking man was spec'd out with the most high-tech armor available at the time. His very presence struck fear in all Israel.

Anyone have a strange phobia here? Many of our fears are irrational- **Arachnophobia**: fear of spiders, not to be confused with **Arachibutyrophobia**- fear of peanut butter sticking to the roof of your mouth. **Glossophobia**: that's the fear of public speaking... what's the worst that can happen? Some of you have **Longwindophobia**- fear that I will preach too long and it will cut into your after church plans. These are irrational fears. But the Israelite army had a RATIONAL fear- **gigantosophobia**- the fear of giants, or at least this one.

Goliath represents **the giant of fear**. I don't care how tough you are, we all have things that we are afraid of and potentially cause us to freeze, panic, wake up in a cold sweat, things make our mind race and cause anxiety and play the what if game...maybe it is your financial situation- you look at what's coming in and what's going out- and it's going in the wrong direction, or your marriage just feels hopeless and you worry what your future holds, or the decisions of your adult children, or your health, or a host of other things that can twist our hearts into a fear pretzel. And yet God has not called us to a life of fear, but of faith and courage. 365x in the Bible we find the phrase "Do not fear!" The question is How? We don't want to be gripped by fear, but is it possible to face our fears with courage? That's what we want to see this morning.

Back into the story, everyone, including King Saul, had **gigantosophobia**, everyone except of course for David, the teenage shepherd. He sees Goliath's height, his strength, his advanced armor and weaponry, he hears his taunt and he says, v.26 *Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?"*

What's the difference? Is David blind? Is he naive? Everyone else sees an existential threat, an indomitable, ancient transformer and they are frozen in fear, but David just sees a man, an uncircumcised man...circumcision was the sign of the covenant between Israel and God and so this is another way of saying this is someone who has no authority to come against the living, the true God. Israel has their eyes fixed on a giant, David has his eyes fixed on the almighty God.

And so eventually David faces off, one-on-one with the Champion Goliath in a duel to the death, winner take all. Now if you are a Las Vegas bookie- I wonder what odds you will give David here? But David knows something that Goliath doesn't. He knows the prophecy from Samuel that he's the anointed future King of Israel. He believes God's plan for his victory and he stakes his future and the future of his people on God's sovereign plan for rescue through him.

**40** Then he took his staff in his hand, chose five smooth stones from the stream,

put them in the pouch of his shepherd's bag and, with his sling in his hand, approached the Philistine.

**41** Meanwhile, the Philistine, with his shield bearer in front of him, kept coming closer to David.

**42** He looked David over and saw that he was little more than a boy, glowing with health and handsome, and he despised him.

**43** He said to David, "Am I a dog, that you come at me with sticks?" And the Philistine cursed David by his gods.

**44** "Come here," he said, "and I'll give your flesh to the birds and the wild animals!"

**45** David said to the Philistine, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty,

the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. **46** This day the LORD will deliver you into my hands, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head.

This very day I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds and the wild animals, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel.

**47** All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD's, and he will give all of you into our hands." Notice David's two goals were directed up to the glory of God. This was not about his personal accolades, fame and legacy, this was for the fame and glory of the Lord's name so that people would turn to him for salvation.

**48** As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him.

**49** Reaching into his bag and taking out a stone, he slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell facedown on the ground.

**50** So David triumphed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone; without a sword in his hand he struck down the Philistine and killed him.

**51** David ran and stood over him. He took hold of the Philistine's sword and drew it from the sheath. After he killed him, he cut off his head with the sword.

When the Philistines saw that their hero was dead, they turned and ran.

**52** Then the men of Israel and Judah surged forward with a shout Talk about a sharp swing in momentum. Israel is frozen in terror, suddenly they are filled with courage, The Philistines were filled with courage now they are fleeing in terror! **and pursued the Philistines to the entrance of Gath and to the gates of Ekron.**

Their dead were strewn along the Shaaraim road to Gath and Ekron. **53** When the Israelites returned from chasing the Philistines, they plundered their camp.

**54** David took the Philistine's head and brought it to Jerusalem; he put the Philistine's weapons in his own tent. Now you say, That's sick! Is this some kind of trophy to display? Why would he do that? There were no cameras, who in Jerusalem is going to believe the story that this teenage shepherd beat Goliath?! This is evidence. What an incredible story, an inspiring story of the underdog, overcoming fear, defeating the odds and getting the victory. And certainly there are lots of inspiring lessons I've heard people share from this story- brain is stronger than brawn, every giant has a weakness. Or the power of positive thinking- conceive, believe, achieve to overcome your giants. There is some benefit to positive visualization and sometimes God does reward that kind of faith. But courage and faith does not guarantee victory. My freshman year of high school wrestling I faced off in a meet with the 3x PA state champion wrestler, Josh Miller. As my coach was preparing all the wrestlers on the team, he was going through the lineup telling each wrestler the game plan and what we need from them- I need a pin from you, I need a hard fought win...and then he got to me and just shook his head and he said Nate...just try not to get pinned in the first period. Thanks for the confidence boost coach! What happened? Well I don't exactly know I just remember shaking hands and then looking up at the lights a few seconds later. Now even if the coach gave me the most ra-ra speech and I got filled with self belief and I visualized a victory, I wasn't winning that match. Courage doesn't guarantee victory.

The key to understanding the main point of this story is asking ourselves the same question that the original hearers of this story would have been asking. **"Who are we in the story? Who are we most like?"** And the answer is not David. We are not most like David, we are the Israelite army, the scared people. What does God give to people filled with the fear of defeat and death? He does not give them merely an example to aspire to, **He gives them a champion.**

Remember what a champion is? A champion, according to the ancient rules of war, was one who stood as a representative for the whole army. The whole army was IN their champion, if he conquers they all conquer, if they are defeated they are all defeated. And David, Israel's champion, defeated Goliath. What happened as soon as David cut off the head, literally

disembodied the one who represented their greatest fears? They were filled with courage to pursue the already defeated enemy and get the victory.

What is our greatest fear? Deep down we all know it's not the fear of snakes or public speaking or even death. It's the giant behind all those fears- a fear of snakes is really a fear of the snake, a spiritual creature, Satan who threatens to consume us. The fear of public speaking is really the fear of vulnerability to judgment because we know our flaws and sins and we fear being seen by the ultimate judge God who is perfect. The fear of death is really the greatest fear, being lost for eternity in Hell, forever alienated from God. If the God of the Bible is real, then being away from Him forever is our ultimate nightmare.

Ah, but who is our champion? Hebrews 11, we read about the heroes of the faith. Remember Noah, and Abraham, Jacob and David shows up on that list, remember David....but then after all those names in the hall of faith, it says in the next chapter **12:2 Fixing our eyes on Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith.** You know what that word author means? It's the Greek word for Champion. Remember David....but we fix our eyes on Jesus, because David points to Jesus. Jesus is our champion.

David is like Jesus but not the same as Jesus. David defeated the giant Goliath in spite of his weakness, Jesus defeats the three-headed Giant of Satan, Sin and Death by voluntarily making himself weak, allowing himself to be nailed to a cross. David saved them from slavery to the Philistines and physical death, Jesus saves us from spiritual slavery to sin and eternal death. David risked his life to save His people, Jesus gave his life to save the world.

Because David was their representative, the Israelite army was IN David, they were victorious. Because Jesus is our representative and conquered the grave, all those who are IN Jesus are victorious over Satan, Sin and Death. So my question is, **who is your Champion?** There is only three ways we can answer that question. #1 A Giant like Goliath. We are looking to someone or something that looks formidable and secure but is ultimately headless. Looking the giant of some other religion. Or the giant of science and education or government. These are just Goliaths. Or we #2 can look to ourselves as our own Champion. Trying to be good enough, strong enough. Friends, that's like me as a freshman facing 3x state champion Josh Miller. Your sin will pin you. The Bible says just one sin separates us from God. Or #3 we can look to our True Champion Jesus Christ. Who is your Champion?

You say, OK Nate that's great, I'm already a Christian, I believe that but I'm still struggling with being frozen in fear. Yes but who are you looking at? Your fears and the what ifs? Or Jesus? **Look to Jesus our Champion for courage.** The Israelite army looked to David's victory and it turned terror into courage, and the confident foe into a defeated enemy. In the same way, we need to look to Jesus' victory for courage. That's what made the 1st century church world changers for Christ and the same is true for us. **Hebrews 12:2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.**

*For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

**3** *Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.*

True courage is not the absence of fear, it's the presence of eternal joy. Joy is the present experience of a future reality. Jesus faced the cross with the present experience of a future reality that the enemy will be defeated and God will be with his people forever. That suffering in this life is short and eternity is long. Being a Christian means joy is ours, no one can take that from us. When you face the fear of financial insecurity, joy is ours because the presence of money or lack of it does not secure us, our Champion Jesus does. When you face the fear of being rejected, joy is ours because in Jesus our Champion, we are accepted. When you face the fear, even of suffering and death, joy is ours because of our Champion *Romans 8:38-39 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth,*

*nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Some of us knew **Matt Douglas** and were at his celebration of life service. While the giant of Huntington's Disease threatened to make him frozen in fear, Matt looked to His Champion, Jesus. He would always say, "God's got this." He refused to be chained to fear. He fought for joy, because he was secured in his future.