

“God’s Unlikely Champion” (The Shepherd Boy Who Made His Name Famous In All The Earth)

1 Samuel 17:1-58

Introduction: 1) David and Goliath is one of the most popular and well known stories in the Bible. And yet because we know it so well, I am afraid we don’t know it as well as we think or should. We don’t see it and understand it as God intended. We fail to see this “little story” in light of the “Big Story” of the Bible. You see it really isn’t about “the bigger they are the harder they fall.” Believe it or not, missions and the glory of God is at the heart of what God wants us to see in this story of salvation.

2) God made a good world where everything flourished and functioned as He intended (Gen.1-2). However, Adam and Eve yielded to the temptation of the Serpent-Satan in the garden and all of creation was plunged into sin (Gen. 3). God responded immediately by promising the coming of a deliverer, a Savior, who would crush the head of our enemy (Gen. 3:15). Genesis 3:15 is surely one of the most important verses in the Bible. Later God told Abram that he would bless those who bless God’s people and curse those who curse God’s people (Gen.12:3). And in Leviticus 24:16, the Bible says those who “blaspheme (curse) the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death.” How? By stoning!

3) All of this provides the backdrop and the greater context for a story that is not intended to teach us to “dare to be a David.” No, it is a story that teaches us as Psalm 96:4 says, “Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods.” It is a story about a little David who slew a little giant, who typifies and points to a greater David named Jesus who will slay the greater giants that seek our destruction, the giants called sin, Satan, death and hell. This is the story of a champion who does for us what we could never do for ourselves! That is why David Platt says, “the point of the story is not to be brave in the face of giants, the point of the story is to be passionate for the glory of God.”

4) This is one of the longest and most detailed stories in the Bible. It is also the longest story about David in the Scriptures. Interestingly, with the exception of Jesus, the Bible devotes more material to David than any other person. It teaches us that God topples the strong and proud like Saul and Goliath, but that He delights in exalting the lowly and humble like David and Jesus. It is told slowly and dramatically for full effect. As we walk thru this text, if you begin to get the feeling “we’ve been here later” (not before), then I believe what God intended for us to understand from this text is taking place. Note first with me:

I. God has his enemies that will mock and oppose the advance of His kingdom

17:1-16

- The Philistines and Israel were mortal enemies, arch-enemies. Hostilities between them go way back. Philistines are actually mentioned as early as Gen. 10:14. Since the days of Joshua and the Judges the Hebrews and the Philistines had battled off and on over the land. In recent days the Philistines had captured the Ark of the Covenant recorded in 1 Sam. 4-5. They worshipped a number of pagan gods including Dagon who did not make out so well when the Ark of the Covenant paid him a visit!
- Once more Israel and the one true God are being called out by the idolatrous and pagan Philistines. This time the Philistines are sure they have an unbeatable hand and they are ready to play it.

1) **The enemies of God are often fearful in appearance.** **17:1-7**

- The Philistines gather for battle west of Bethlehem, 17 miles WSW of Jerusalem (v1). Saul and Israel gather and encamp opposite the Philistines with a valley separating the 2 armies, the valley of Elah (v. 2).
- Suddenly from the Philistine camp emerges their champion, Goliath from Gath. The word “champion”, found only here in the OT (cf. v. 23), means “the man between 2 [armies].” He is their mediator, their representative. And what a champion he is: 9ft, 9 inches tall (v. 4). His coat of mail, literally, “scale armor”, weighs 126 pounds (v.5) and gives him the appearance of a serpent! His spear weighs about 15 pounds

(v.7), and he has a shield-bearer carrying a shield the size of a normal man. What an intimidating opponent.

- Now don't miss this. He is a champion clothed like a serpent! Echoes of Gen 3:15 begin ringing in our ears. He is an intimidating figure to say the least, but in the back of our minds we also should be hearing the words of 1 Samuel 16:7, "But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees man: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart."
- Application: Don't judge other people based on their appearance. God doesn't.

2) **The enemies of God are often boastful with their words** 17:8-10, 16

- Goliath was truly intimidating in his appearance. He was also insulting with his words (read vs. 8-10). Goliath challenges Saul and Israel to a "winner-take-all death match." This is a high-stake contest where only one man would be left standing (alive).
- Goliath repeatedly defied the ranks of Israel (v. 10). Verse 16 informs us he did this before God and his people for 40 days and 40 nights. Day after day in the wilderness this serpent champion tempts and insults the people of God. He would have benefited from the prayer of Hannah that

sets the stage for the unfolding narratives of 1 and 2 Samuel. There in 1 Samuel 2:3 she said, “Talk no more so very proudly, let not arrogance come from your mouth, for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed.” And in vs. 6-7 she reminds us, “The LORD kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up. The LORD makes poor and makes rich; he brings low and exalts.” God is about to use the weak to shame the strong (1 Cor. 1:27-29) and Goliath never sees it coming.

3) **The enemies of God often discourage and terrify us 17:11 (also v.24)**

- Goliath threw down the gauntlet but no one in Israel, including their great King Saul of whom the Bible says, “From his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people” (1 Sam. 9:2), was willing to pick it up. Verse 11 says they were dismayed and greatly afraid.” Verse 24 adds, “All the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him and were much afraid.” Not a man could be found to face Goliath. Their warrior-king would not fight. Their commanders would not fight. Not a single soldier was willing to go one-on-one with this giant.
- Israel was in need of a new King, a new champion, who would fight their cause. They needed a better Adam, a man like Moses, a warrior like Joshua who could crush the head of this serpent champion. They needed

a good shepherd, a true hero, who was back in Bethlehem doing his duty as a faithful son. Only he could give them courage. Only he could save the day. They needed the one God had been preparing for the big thing by teaching him to be faithful in the little things.

II. God raises up His servant who will trust in God and defend the Lord's

name

16:6-13; 17:17-37.

- 17:17-37 will make no sense without the immediate context of 16:6-13.

There we meet for the first time a man named Jesse and his sons. There we meet for the first time a shepherd boy named David who will have the Spirit of the LORD rush upon him” (16:13) and who would go forth as the Lord’s servant to defend God’s name and defeat the snake scaled enemy of God’s people. Israel had asked for a king that would “go out before us and fight our battles” (1 Sam. 8:24). They thought it would be Saul. God had determined it would be David. Six characteristics are noted about little David. These same six Characteristics are true of the greater David from Bethlehem as well, Messiah Jesus.

1) David was the Lord's anointed King

16:6-7

- Samuel came to Bethlehem to anoint a new King because the Lord had rejected Saul for his disobedience and idolatry (1 Sam. 15:22-23). The one who would be the new King would be God’s choice not men’s. The

elders of Israel had asked for “a king to judge us like all the nations” (1 Sam 8:5) and the Lord gave them Saul. Now God would give them the Lord’s anointed, one of whom the messianic Psalm 2:12 warns, “Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.” David was this king.

2) **David had a heart after the Lord.**

16:7

- This is one of the best known and most insightful verses in the Bible. It takes on additional significance and importance when contrasted with the impressive stature of Saul and the imposing size of Goliath!
- The Lord is not impressed with how one looks or their height, their appearance or their stature. It is not the externals that impress Yahweh, it is what He sees on the inside. “The Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.” The Lord looks at the real you not the made up you. The Lord sees when no one else is looking. The Lord sees what no one else can see.
- Chuck Swindoll says, “God rejects the people-pleasers and exalts the God-pleasers...God notices the nobodies” (*David: Study Guide*, p.13).
No one noticed David but the Lord.

3) **David was the Lord’s chosen servant**

16:8-10; 17:31-36

- 3 times in 16:8-10 we see the phrase “the Lord’s chosen.” David, the youngest (16:11) a keeper of sheep, he was the Lord’s chosen. And, he was the Lord’s servant. 3 times in chapter 17 (vs. 32, 34, 36). David refers to himself as a servant. Parallels to Isaiah 53 and Servant of the Lord are hard to ignore.
- And what a chosen servant he is! (read vs. 31-36). This anointed “shepherd-king in waiting” has killed lions and bears thru “The Lord who delivered me.” He is equally convinced the Lord “will deliver me from the hand of the Philistine” (v. 37). It is said of Isaiah’s Suffering Servant of the Lord that “the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand” (Isa. 53:10). David typifies this same promise as the Lord will prosper his hand as it plants a stone in the skull of Goliath.

4) David was blessed with the Spirit

16:13

- When David was anointed by Samuel “the Spirit of the Lord rushed (HCSB, “took control,” NIV, “came powerfully”) upon David from that day forward.” The Spirit of the Lord anointed Him for his assignment as a Shepherd-King and a savior of the people of Israel. David was a Spirit-filled, Spirit-controlled man.
- This same “Spirit of the Lord” also will rush upon, “descend” on the Son of David, the Lord Jesus, at His baptism, the inauguration of His

assignment as a Savior-King of all nations. There the Lord would say,

“This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:16-17).

5) David was zealous for the honor of the living God 17:17-27

- David had gone back and forth from Jesse to Saul, home and the front lines, father and brothers (17:15). On this occasion he goes (vs. 17-18) with his father asking for him to bring back a token! (cf v. 54, 57). Boy will his daddy be surprised!
- David arrived to hear the daily taunting of Goliath (v.23). All the men were afraid and fled (v. 24). They also shared the prize Saul promised any man who would take on Goliath (v. 25 & 27).
- David in the midst of this shared his mind on the matter, “this pagan Philistine is not just defying the armies of Israel, he is defying “the living God” (v. 26). Perhaps this is the first time he has heard the Lord mocked and ridiculed in such a manner. He would not stand for it. Others may run away from this giant blasphemer (v. 24) but David will soon run toward this mocker (v. 48) and fight zealously and bravely for the honor of the living God.

6) David had faith that God would deliver him 17:37

- David saw Goliath as just another beast for the Lord to take down on his behalf. The paw of a lion? No problem? The Lord delivered me! The

paw of a bear? No problem! The Lord delivered me! The paw (hand) of this snake-man? No problem! The Lord will deliver me! Note it is not “can deliver.” It is “He will deliver!”

- You see a giant. I see a midget when you put him beside the living God (v. 26, 36), the Lord of hosts and God of armies (v. 45), the Lord who saves (v. 47). David truly knew and believed, “greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world” (1John 4:4).
- David had a basic philosophy of life that all of us can learn from: I will look at life with the eyes of faith and I will let God fight my battles His way! I will not fight God’s battles man’s way! His ways are not our ways. He achieves victory thru weakness not strength. He loves to work thru nobodies more than somebodies. David understood he was not fighting for God; God was fighting for David.

III. God will fight our battles and give us victory to demonstrate His salvation

17:38-58

- It is showtime. The main event is about to begin. If Michael Buffer of ESPN, HBO, Showtime, Etc, Sports Fame had been present, he would have shouted to the top of his lungs, “Let’s get ready to rumble.”

- Most, no doubt, anticipated a quick and decisive knockout. It appears that David is going as a lamb to the slaughter. On this they were correct. But few, if any, could have imagined who would deliver the fatal blow.

1) God is not concerned with the outward appearance 17:38-44

- Saul wanted to dress David like Goliath (vs. 38-39)! David would go as a simple shepherd with the Spirit of the Lord upon him (16:13; 17:40).
- When Goliath saw David he was insulted by this runt of the litter, (17:42-43) and cursed David by his gods (17:43). Perhaps Goliath had forgotten that the Philistine god Dagon had lost his head and hands and fell face down before the Ark of the Lord in 1 Samuel 5:1-5. We are about to see “déjà vu” all over again. The head smashing, skull crushing God is about to do it again and he will keep on doing it until he crushes the head of the serpent at a place called Golgotha, “The place of the skull!”
- Goliath is oblivious to his impending doom. He did not know that this fight was fixed. He taunts David telling him that his flesh will soon be food for birds and beast (v. 46).) Goliath sees as a man sees. Goliath actually sees nothing!

2) God will save those who trust in Him 17:45-47

- David was a man after God's own heart who saw the situation not as man sees but as God sees! And, he was able to do a little pre-game trash talk of his own.
- You come with mere human weapons big boy (a sword, spear and javelin), but I come in the name (and power) of Yahweh of host, the God of the armies of Israel who fights for those who trust Him and will do so today. You are toast! You have defied the Lord and today He will deliver you into my hands and I will decapitate your head and divide you for food between the birds of the air and the beast of the earth. I will do this so that: 1) all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. There is a missionary impulse in what is about to happen to you!; 2) that all this assembly may know that Yahweh saves (the Lord is the hero of this story!); and 3) that the battle is the Lord's and He gives victory to those who believe and trust in Him. David knows who should get the glory for what is about to happen. This is the main point of the story all along.

3) **God will keep His promise to crush the heads of our enemies**

17:48-50

- The Lord's champion now engages Satan's champion. It is no contest! It is a 1st round knockout that surprises everyone but David! David "ran quickly toward the battle line" to meet Goliath (v. 48). He took "a stone

and slung it and struck the Philistine on His forehead, and like his pagan idol god Dagon before the Ark of the Covenant in 1 Samuel 5:4, “he fell on his face to the ground!” (v. 49).

- Verse 50 makes the interesting point, “there was no sword in the hand of David.” This was not an ordinary victory. No one had even seen anything like this before. But God had promised His people all the way back in the Garden of Eden that He would crush the head of their enemies. Today in the valley of Elah thru little David He had kept His Word. A thousand years later on a hill called Golgotha, the place of the skull, he would keep his word again to the greater Son of David! (Matt. 1:1).

4) **God will use the weapons of our enemies to defeat our enemies** 17:5

- There is some question as to exactly when Goliath died. The “stone shot” may have only knocked him out. We cannot be sure. What is certain is David finished the job by taking Goliath’s own sword, finishing him off by removing his head from his shoulders. He used the serpent champion’s own weapon to climatically defeat him. Again, “we have been here later!” On the cross our champion, our Savior, would defeat death by His death. There was the death of death in the death of Christ! What a great reversal! What a marvelous salvation!

5) God allows His people to share in His victory

17:51-58

- Colossians 2:15 reminds us that when Jesus died on the cross and rose again, God “disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.” There was a similar scene this day outside the city of Jerusalem.
 - The enemies of God fled for all to see (v.51-52).
 - God’s people experienced the joys of victory won by their champion (v.53).
 - David made a public spectacle of Goliath’s head in Jerusalem, the city he would later claim as his capital (v.54), and he claimed the giants armor as his own reward (v. 54).
 - David did what he did as the servant of his servant father and for his people (v.58). Once again it is clear isn’t it, “we have been here later!”

Conclusion: (“The Rest of the Story”)

In Ezekiel 34:22-24 the Lord promised his people, “I will rescue my flock; they shall no longer be a prey. And I will judge between sheep and sheep. And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them, I am the LORD, I have spoken.” God indeed sent His servant

shepherd. His name is Jesus. Like his forefather David, but even more so, He would be the Lord's anointed King and a man after God's own heart. He would be the chosen servant of Isaiah 53 and He would crush the heads of all our enemies following 40 days of battling the serpent Satan in the wilderness. He would use the weapon of our enemy, death, and defeat death, inviting his people who trust in Him to share in His victory.

This greater son of David, would be crowned with power, wealth, wisdom, and might for He is the lamb who was slain (Rev. 5:12). He also would receive a bride and make free all who are blood related to Him as their Savior and substitute. This Davidic King, thru His victory, would see that all the earth would know that, there is a God in Israel and that the Lord saves, for the battle is His! And, because we are in Christ, we do not fight for victory, we fight from victory! Christ has won, and so wielding the sword of the Spirit (the Word of God) and empowered by the gospel, we in our champion move ahead against Satan, sin, death and hell because we know the gates of hell shall not stand against us (Matt. 16:18). These giants have been decapitated by our Good Shepherd, our Great Shepherd. And now you know, the rest of the story.

David and Goliath then, is really not about pulling for the underdog. It is not about "the bigger they come the harder they fall." It is not about the size of the dog in the fight vs. the size of the fight in the dog. It is not about defeating the

giants in your life. It is not about little David as your example. It is about little David providing a preview of a coming attraction of a greater David who is your Savior, your substitute, your unlikely champion. Again Psalm 2:12, speaking of this coming Messianic Davidic King says it so well, "Blessed are all who take refuge in him." Let this unlikely champion make his Name famous in your life as He is becoming famous in all the earth. Look on Him as God sees Him. Let this Son of David, Jesus Christ, be your Champion.