

## “David II: Fighting Your Goliath”

1 Samuel 17:1-54

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Okay, we’ve got the army of Israel on one side, and the army of the Philistines on the other. The Israelites have settled in Canaan, but they’re having trouble with the Philistines, another group of people not native to the land. The Philistines have arrived in Israel not by land but by sea and they’ve been there longer than the Israelites have been. By this point, they have established several very strong city-states in the southwestern corner of the land: the cities of Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron, Gaza, and Gath. They are a dangerous, ruthless people, and for a couple hundred years they are the Israelites’ most feared enemies. At this point in the story, the Philistines have invaded Israelite territory, and the Israelites want to push them back before they gain a greater foothold and turn the Israelite men whom they conquer into slaves and do who-knows-what to the women and children. So Saul, the King of Israel, gathers the Israelite army for battle. But the Philistines have a weapon that the Israelites don’t know how to fight: their champion, Goliath. The text tells us that Goliath stood “six cubits and a span.” That’s like *ten feet*. King Saul himself stands head and shoulders above all the other Israelites, but Goliath dwarfs Saul by a considerable extent. The Israelite army is cowering in fear. Goliath issues a challenge: send out someone to fight against me. If they kill me, we will be *your* slaves; if I kill him, you will be *our* slaves. For forty days, twice a day, Goliath issues his challenge, and no one – not even the bravest among Saul’s men – is willing to rise to the occasion. Saul promises to give his own daughter in marriage to the Israelite man who fights and defeats Goliath, but even that isn’t enough to motivate anyone in his army to fight the giant.

Yet David – the former shepherd boy, the younger brother of several of the men in King Saul’s army – is out there in the camp, bringing provisions to his brothers. He hears Goliath issue the challenge, and David wonders aloud: “Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?” His eldest brother rebukes him for speaking impudently and not being in the sheepfold where he belongs. But other soldiers who heard David’s question report it to King Saul, and Saul has David brought before him – and David makes an offer to the king: *he* will be the Israelite champion. “*I* will go and fight with this Philistine!” Saul reminds David “You are just a boy,” but David recounts his service record killing lions and bears to protect his father’s flock – “and,” says David, “this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, since he has defied the armies of the living God!”

This, my friends, is David’s most important quality. He recognizes – apparently, when no one else around him does – that the Israelite army is not just *any* army. The Israelite army is the army who

has the special purpose of protecting and defending the *chosen people of God*. You have to remember, the way the Bible tells the story, the Israelites have been chosen by God to be a “holy nation,” a “royal people.” God did not choose any other people the way God chose Israel. Eventually, it is through Israel that redemption will be made available to the whole world, but that won’t happen for another years yet. What David knows is that Israel has a *special place* in God’s eye, and that the Israelite army *must* prevail. It is David’s *faith*, his understanding of God, his understanding of Israel’s place in God’s divine history, that tips the balance in this fight. It is David who has to constantly remind everyone around him – including the king himself! – that they are not just fighting for their *land*, or for their *freedom*, or for the safety and protection of their *women and children*. They are fighting for all of that, to be sure, but more than that, they are fighting for *God*. God *needs* them to protect and defend themselves. They have a *job* to do for God, and they *can’t do it* if they get defeated by the Philistines!

That’s the first thing you need to note: David’s *faith* in Israel’s divine mission. The second thing you need to note here is that *that faith gives David a tremendous amount of motivation and confidence*. It’s David who becomes the real leader in this fight, the one who talks to the troops, mustering up their weary souls, reminding them why they’re there in the first place. That should be *Saul’s* job – but Saul’s not doing it, because *he doesn’t have the kind of faith that David does*. When you are *convinced* that the Lord is on your side, when you are *convinced* in the rightness of your cause, *nothing* can stand in the way – not even a well-armed ten-foot giant.

Saul sends David out with his blessing. He dresses David in his own armor, but it’s way too big for him. “I cannot even *walk* with these!” exclaims David. “How am I supposed to *fight?!?*” He takes the armor off, and turns to his trusty slingshot instead.

This is the third thing you need to notice here. *David does not give up*. No matter how great the challenge, no matter how impossible the odds, *David isn’t willing to quit*. If Plan A doesn’t work, then, by golly, he’s going to turn to Plan B. How many of us would give up if our Plan A didn’t work? And how many of us would even have the courage or the gall to be out there in the *first* place? Saul can’t get any of his men to go out there even *once*. David goes out not once, but *twice!*

You know the rest of the story – slaying Goliath with one well-placed stone in his forehead. But do not fail to notice what David says to Goliath before that happens: “You come to me with sword and spear and javelin; but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel! I will strike you down and cut off your head; and I will give the dead bodies of the Philistine army this very day to the birds of the air and to the wild animals of the earth, so that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the Lord does not save by sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord’s, and he will give you into our hand!” Once again, David sees what everyone else around him cannot see: this is not just a battle between men – this is a battle *for the Lord!* David’s got a *cause* he’s trying to promote. He’s trying to promote *the will of God* – and he’s willing to do *whatever it takes* to make God’s will happen!

The rest of the story is pretty gruesome – heads getting chopped off and that sort of thing, the kind of stories young boys tend to just love, while their mothers try to soften it up as much as they can.

Blood and guts, and lots of it! I remember the imaginary battles my male friends and I used to have on the playground at recess – yes, *this* is the kind of story that we boys just *love*!

But enough of that. I want to know this:

*What's your Goliath?*

We all have one. There's something in each one of our lives that we're afraid to touch, afraid to tackle, afraid to deal with, afraid to fight. There's something for each of us that makes us just quiver in our boots. *Oh, no – I can't possibly do that!* What is it for you?

Maybe it's your marriage. Maybe things are a bit rocky between you and your spouse, and you just *really don't want to deal with it*, because you're afraid of how difficult it's going to be to really talk through the things that need to be talked about. Maybe you figure it's better to just let things continue in the so-so state that they're in, rather than dealing with really tough issues that you and your spouse would both rather just avoid.

But maybe . . . maybe it's the case that God wants you to *fight for your marriage*.

Or maybe it's your health. Maybe the list of things your doctor is concerned about in your life is growing, and your list of medications is growing, and deep down you *know* you really need to do some things different, make some healthier eating choices, get some more exercise, but you're *afraid* of what those changes might mean. Maybe you don't want to give up eating those luscious desserts, or munching on those sugary snacks. Or maybe you don't want to make your body work hard and break into a sweat. And so you settle for a body that's slowly but surely getting a little more unhealthy with each passing year.

But maybe . . . maybe it's the case that God wants you to *fight for your health*.

Or maybe it's your job. Maybe things are stressful at work, and you've got a difficult relationship with your supervisor or a colleague or a direct report, and you really just don't want to deal with it. You get by, day after day, week after week, trying to just "suck it up," but deep down you're in pain, and you're afraid of what will happen if you raise the issue that needs to be raised. Or, maybe you really don't like your job much at all, and there's something you'd really rather be doing, but you're afraid to put your resume out, or you're afraid to go back to school, because you're not sure what will happen if you try to strike out into the unknown.

But maybe . . . maybe it's the case that God wants you to *fight for a meaningful and rewarding career*.

Or maybe it's the way you manage your time. Or maybe it's the clutter you've accumulated in your house. Or maybe it's the debt that you've accumulated. Or maybe it's some other important relationship in your life. Or maybe it's something about your character. Or maybe it's depression. Or maybe it's a habit you have that really needs to change.

What is it? What is it for you? What is it that makes you *quiver in your boots*? What are you *really afraid of touching, of tackling, of dealing with, of fighting either for or against*?

And then, the more important question: what is it that *God* is calling you to do?

See, it didn't matter what those Israelite soldiers wanted. What mattered was what *God* wanted. *God* wanted the Israelites to *stand firm* against the Philistines. *Nobody* in the Israelite army understood that. Even the *King* didn't understand that. The *only* person who understood that was a little shepherd boy who happened to be handy with a slingshot.

*It doesn't matter if you're quaking in your boots. If there's a job to be done, that God wants done, then we do it. No questions! No arguments! We're Christians, dad gum it, and our job as Christians is to do what God wants us to do – not what we're comfortable doing!* Go back and read the book of the Acts of the Apostles in the New Testament again. Look at how those early Christians were filled with *boldness* and *power* and *strength* from the Holy Spirit – boldness and power and strength which gave them the will and the resolve to *stand up and fight*, instead of quaking in their boots. We are the inheritors of their faith. There is *no reason* why we Christians should *ever* be quaking in our boots. We have a situation that feels overwhelming to us, we know what we need to do, we pray for strength, and then we *do* it. No questions, no arguments, *no turning back*.

We've been encouraging you for a few weeks now to bring your slingshot today. How many of you brought your slingshots? Let me see them – raise them up high!

Okay, great. Now, put those away. *You don't need them*.

David killed Goliath with his slingshot, right?

*Wrong*. David killed Goliath with his *faith*.

It was David's absolute, steadfast, utter devotion to *God* that motivated him to go out there and fight in the first place. And it was his absolute, steadfast, utter devotion to *God* that motivated him to go out there a *second* time, when he realized that Saul's armor wasn't going to work for him. And it was his absolute, steadfast, utter devotion to *God* that motivated him to speak those strong words to Goliath: "I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel! . . . the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hand!" The slingshot? Important, yes, but not *nearly* as important as David's *resolve*.

What's the Goliath in your life that you need to fight? What is the one thing you most need to do with your life, *above all else*, to make your life more in line with the life that *God* envisions for you – the one thing that has you *most afraid*? Take that, in one hand, and measure it out against your *faith*. Pretend your arms are a scale. You've got your Goliath in one hand, and you've got your faith in another. Which one's stronger? Which one's going to win the day?

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