

## Let no man's heart fail because of him | 1 Samuel 17

*[33] Teach me, O LORD, the way of your statutes;  
and I will keep it to the end.  
[34] Give me understanding, that I may keep your law  
and observe it with my whole heart.  
[35] Lead me in the path of your commandments,  
for I delight in it.  
[36] Incline my heart to your testimonies,  
and not to selfish gain!  
[37] Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things;  
and give me life in your ways.  
[38] Confirm to your servant your promise,  
that you may be feared.  
[39] Turn away the reproach that I dread,  
for your rules are good.  
[40] Behold, I long for your precepts;  
in your righteousness give me life! | Psalm 119:33-40*

### Introduction

Grab your Bibles and open them up to 1 Samuel 17. We continue our series Crowns today, which is both a narrative story of what happened in Israel, as well as a picture for us of what godly leadership looks like. We have learned from a number of leaders.

Eli: what happens when you let family be more important than faithfulness. Eli gave his wicked sons too much slack and it ended up destroying them all.

Samuel: who faithfully served Israel, only to have them declare him: not good enough. We want a king. As I mentioned last week, he stays in the story to guide us through this transition.

Saul: who trusted in his own pragmatic view of the situation to guide his actions, and ultimately to be rejected by God.

Now we have David. Last week we saw David thrown into the spotlight, the youngest and weakest son of Jesse ordained as king. Beyond the fact that he is ruddy and handsome, has the heart of God on Him, and tends sheep, we really know nothing about David. Today is his character development. In today's story we get to see what drives David and what makes him the prototypical godly leader in the OT. To introduce David, we have a story you have ALL heard before: David vs. Goliath...the thrilla in the valley of Elah; let's just get into the text. 1 Samuel 17, starting in v.1:

### Choose a man for yourselves

*[1] Now the Philistines gathered their armies for battle. And they were gathered at Socoh, which belongs to Judah, and encamped between Socoh and Azekah, in Ephes-dammim. [2] And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered, and encamped in the Valley of Elah, and drew up in line of battle against the Philistines. [3] And the Philistines stood on the mountain on the one side, and Israel stood on the mountain on the other side, with a valley between them. [4] And there came out from the camp of the Philistines a champion named Goliath of Gath, whose height was six*

*cubits and a span. [5] He had a helmet of bronze on his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail, and the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of bronze. [6] And he had bronze armor on his legs, and a javelin of bronze slung between his shoulders. [7] The shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron. And his shield-bearer went before him. [8] He stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, "Why have you come out to draw up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not servants of Saul? Choose a man for yourselves, and let him come down to me. [9] If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will be your servants. But if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall be our servants and serve us." [10] And the Philistine said, "I defy the ranks of Israel this day. Give me a man, that we may fight together." [11] When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid.*

The story begins by painting a picture of a battle scene. Lined up on one hillside are the Israelites. On the other side is the dreaded Philistine army. There is a valley between them. In a regular battle, both sides would charge down from their hillside into the valley to engage. This battle has yet to begun and is still in taunting phase.

Most of the taunting seems to be in one direction, this is because the Philistines are the more imposing power. While the size of the armies are not described the situation seems to dictate that Israel is at a disadvantage (otherwise they would not sit and accept the taunting, they would simply flatten their opponents),

The imposing size of the Philistine army is represented by their warrior Goliath. V.4-11 are used to describe him. He is a man of enormous size, with some people claiming that he is close to 10' tall, but more likely he was about 7' which in comparison to others of this time and place would make him a giant. With this, he wore 126# of armor and had a 16# iron tip on the top of his spear. He stood out in a crowd.

Again we see size being used as this worldly measure of power. Last chapter it was David's small stature that made him forgotten by his father, and Eliab's size that made Samuel assume that he was the future king. In the past, it was Saul's size that made him the choice for king. God is setting us up here. So God is creating a scenario in which our eyes see something very different than His.

Goliath steps out from the army, into the alley and screams at the army of Israel. *C'mon, come out and fight me! Am I not a Philistine, are you not Israel? I defy you!* Then he sets up a challenge. He says send out your best man:

*If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will be your servants. But if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall be our servants and serve us.*

As I said before, Israel would only consider this if it was their best option. They would have to first assume that their army had no chance if they were going to even consider Goliath's 'deal.' So they sit, encamped, waiting for someone in their ranks to summon the courage to fight this giant. The stage is set, tension is built, now we just need a hero, v.12:

**Who is this uncircumcised Philistine**

*[12] Now David was the son of an Ephrathite of Bethlehem in Judah, named Jesse, who had eight sons. In the days of Saul the man was already old and advanced in years. [13] The three oldest sons of Jesse had followed Saul to the battle. And the names of his three sons who went to the battle were Eliab the firstborn, and next to him Abinadab, and the third Shammah. [14] David was the youngest. The three eldest followed Saul, [15] but David went back and forth from Saul to feed his father's sheep at Bethlehem. [16] For forty days the Philistine came forward and took his stand, morning and evening.*

*[17] And Jesse said to David his son, "Take for your brothers an ephah of this parched grain, and these ten loaves, and carry them quickly to the camp to your brothers. [18] Also take these ten cheeses to the commander of their thousand. See if your brothers are well, and bring some token from them."*

*[19] Now Saul and they and all the men of Israel were in the Valley of Elah, fighting with the Philistines. [20] And David rose early in the morning and left the sheep with a keeper and took the provisions and went, as Jesse had commanded him. And he came to the encampment as the host was going out to the battle line, shouting the war cry. [21] And Israel and the Philistines drew up for battle, army against army. [22] And David left the things in charge of the keeper of the baggage and ran to the ranks and went and greeted his brothers. [23] As he talked with them, behold, the champion, the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name, came up out of the ranks of the Philistines and spoke the same words as before. And David heard him.*

*[24] All the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him and were much afraid. [25] And the men of Israel said, "Have you seen this man who has come up? Surely he has come up to defy Israel. And the king will enrich the man who kills him with great riches and will give him his daughter and make his father's house free in Israel." [26] And David said to the men who stood by him, "What shall be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" [27] And the people answered him in the same way, "So shall it be done to the man who kills him."*

Jesse sends David to the battle line to bring supplies for his 3 oldest sons who are part of the army. David gets there, finds his brothers, but then all of a sudden he hears someone shouting. He turns and sees Goliath mocking Israel and mocking God. David is a bit confused. His confusion stems from the fact that Goliath is asking for someone to stand up for Israel and he is standing in an army full of men who are just staring blankly in fear. David wants to know why no one is doing anything. Saul has promised wealth and fame to the person who steps up. God's honor is on the line.

David is challenging their cowardice, which doesn't go over well with his brothers. His oldest brother specifically doesn't like his tone. The story continues, v.28:

#### **Let no man's heart fail because of him**

*[28] Now Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spoke to the men. And Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, "Why have you come down? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your presumption and the evil of your heart, for you have come down to see the battle." [29] And David said, "What have I done now? Was it not but a word?"*

*[30] And he turned away from him toward another, and spoke in the same way, and the people answered him again as before.*

*[31] When the words that David spoke were heard, they repeated them before Saul, and he sent for him. [32] And David said to Saul, "Let no man's heart fail because of him. Your servant will go and fight with this Philistine." [33] And Saul said to David, "You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him, for you are but a youth, and he has been a man of war from his youth." [34] But David said to Saul, "Your servant used to keep sheep for his father. And when there came a lion, or a bear, and took a lamb from the flock, [35] I went after him and struck him and delivered it out of his mouth. And if he arose against me, I caught him by his beard and struck him and killed him. [36] Your servant has struck down both lions and bears, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, for he has defied the armies of the living God." [37] And David said, "The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine." And Saul said to David, "Go, and the LORD be with you!"*

*[38] Then Saul clothed David with his armor. He put a helmet of bronze on his head and clothed him with a coat of mail, [39] and David strapped his sword over his armor. And he tried in vain to go, for he had not tested them. Then David said to Saul, "I cannot go with these, for I have not tested them." So David put them off. [40] Then he took his staff in his hand and chose five smooth stones from the brook and put them in his shepherd's pouch. His sling was in his hand, and he approached the Philistine.*

Eliab, David's oldest brother, the one who Samuel was impressed by, pulls David aside and asks him what he thinks he is doing. How dare you come here and are start questioning the integrity of these men. Who do you think you are. The problem is that Eliab is not listening to what David is saying, he is simply getting defensive. If he stopped for a minute and listened to his brother he would hear David's passion for God, but instead, all he sees is an opportunist who is using his visit to the front lines to run his mouth about things he doesn't know about.

Saul responds a bit differently to David's words. Instead of getting defensive, he calls him into his presence. We don't really know why, but as soon as David is before the king, he makes it clear that he plans to fight Goliath himself. Saul looks at him and it doesn't say laughs, but you can imagine that it is something like this. YOU? No offense, but if we lose we all become servants of the Philistines. Look at that guy, we need someone who can beat him.

David was unfazed. He replied: *Your servant has struck down both lions and bears, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, for he has defied the armies of the living God.*

There are two definitive statements that David is making here. The first is about the source of his courage, the second is the motivation for his action.

He says: I know that God will bring me through this because there is a track record. As a shepherd, David has faced many beasts who came to steal sheep. Apparently, he was not content to scare them off, like I would be; he chased them down, grabbed them by the beard and killed them. God has been using the lowly task of tending sheep to prepare David for war. That's what God does. It like Mr. Miagi from the Karate Kid; trust me, this will work. If you remember the classic film, the Karate master has Danielson doing all sorts of household chores:

driving in nails, painting the fence, and waxing the car, and Daniel just wants to learn karate. Then he finds out that he was not just being used for labor, but all of these tasks were preparing him for something else. In the same way, God orchestrates our lives to prepare us for what He intends to use us for.

The hard part for us is that we want to skip past the shepherding and fence painting. We want the roles that really seem like they are accomplishing something. We need the track record to be able to lean into when the big thing comes along. Without God's work in us, we are just David's brothers standing around looking for someone else to do something.

We also need a proper motivation. The reason that David is acting is not just because he believes he can win. He is not doing this because he is passionate about Israel. The motivation for David's action is God's glory. The theme of this whole chapter is the mockery of God and the defense of His name. David is not only confident that God will deliver him, but he holds God's honor in such high esteem that he simply can't sit by and let this Philistine mock God. His passion for God's honor should be a mirror for us; we don't have this sort of respect. It should reveal to us how human-focused we have all become and how far from God-centered we are. If this is what true motivation looks like, we have a lot of work to do to get there.

David's passionate speech convinces Saul (not that there is a long line of other soldiers waiting to fight). He prepares David for battle, but something isn't right. David can't move in his armor. Why? Because it isn't his armor. David wisely dismisses the outfit to face Goliath in the same way that he faced the lions and the bears. He goes into battle in the same way that he has before: in the way that is tested (his complaint with the armor is that I have not tested them).

There is a lesson here in what it looks like to faithfully follow God: do it by continuing what he is/has already working in you. People get this weird idea that they have to become someone else to be used by God. David did not have to become the prototypical soldier OR wear the king's armor; he simply needed to be who God had created him to be.

Don't emulate someone else, don't conform to what people expect of you, faithfully bring glory to God by continuing to do what He has set before you. I say this, because I think there are a lot of people who do nothing for the kingdom because they are more convinced by what they ARE NOT than what they are. Find confidence in the ways that God has clearly used you and is building you up, then find a way to act in that for His glory. Do something that gains you nothing, but is purely in service to God, not because you have to, or because someone says you have to, but because you get to be part of God's work simply by being who you are.

That is what David does here as he walks out to face a giant with nothing more than a sling. We pick the story up in v.41:

#### **I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts**

*[41] And the Philistine moved forward and came near to David, with his shield-bearer in front of him. [42] And when the Philistine looked and saw David, he disdained him, for he was but a youth, ruddy and handsome in appearance. [43] And the Philistine said to David, "Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?" And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. [44] The Philistine said to David, "Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and to the beasts of the field." [45] Then David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword and with a spear*

*and with 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 defied. [46] This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head. And I will give the dead bodies of the host of the Philistines this day to the birds of the air and to the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, [47] and that all this assembly may know that the LORD saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the LORD's, and he will give you into our hand."*

*[48] When the Philistine arose and came and drew near to meet David, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine. [49] And David put his hand in his bag and took out a stone and slung it and struck the Philistine on his forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell on his face to the ground.*

*[50] So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and struck the Philistine and killed him. There was no sword in the hand of David. [51] Then David ran and stood over the Philistine and took 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 champion was dead, they fled. [52] And the men of Israel and Judah rose with a shout and pursued the Philistines as far as Gath and the gates of Ekron, so that the wounded Philistines fell on the way from Shaaraim as far as Gath and Ekron. [53] And the people of Israel came back from chasing the Philistines, and they plundered their camp. [54] And David took the head of the Philistine and brought it to Jerusalem, but he put his armor in his tent.*

This is the part of the story most people know. David walks out to meet Goliath and when Goliath sees him, he is insulted. He begins to mock David, and Israel and God. David responds by very confidently telling Goliath what he is going to do: kill him, cut his head off, and then give his body to the animals. Why is David going to do this:

*that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, [47] and that all this assembly may know that the LORD saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the LORD's, and he will give you into our hand.*

He wants to teach two lessons here:

1. God is in control. It isn't that God rules over the spiritual world and lets the physical world play out according to its own system. God is God over all of it. There are times when what is happening in the world does not fit with this; when we wonder why God does not intervene or act in a different way. God's purpose in this world is not to make people happy all of the time, it is to make His goodness and glory known. Often, the best way to do that is to rescue us from the mess we create. Here, David plans to use God's power to make His sovereignty known. He knows that God will use him to show Himself.

2. David also wants to make it clear that while God will rescue, He isn't always going to do it through confronting the power structures head on. It is somewhat ironic that here, just after David says this, he defeats Goliath in a physical conflict. All of the build up about size and weaponry is trying to get us to see how absolutely ridiculous this whole episode was to anyone watching. While David killing Goliath was victory in a physical way, it was not according to the rules of power. God, and David, want us to see that joining God on His mission in the world is

not going to be winning as we often think of it. Paul alludes to this in 2 Corinthians 10 when he says:

*[3] For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. [4] For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. [5] We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, [6] being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete. | 3-6*

He creates a dichotomy here that we all live and feel. God is present and active, He cares about us and our needs; He isn't going to provide for us and help us to win in the ways that we went. He understands and empathizes with our humanity, but He isn't interested in pandering to it. I say all of this because the story of David and Goliath is often used as this motivational poster: you can face your giants. It turns into this story where God will show up to help us face the hard things of our life and win! As we have seen today, that isn't what this is at all.

This is about how God will shape and equip His people to do His work. He will do it by orchestrating our lives to prepare us. He will bring us into situations where we have the opportunity to act for His glory, not because we are what people expect, but because it was what God planned. The greatest part of this story is that at no point is David intimidated by Goliath. To everyone else around him, his quest is madness. He walks out there with confidence, knowing that:

1. God is with him.
2. God has used him to defeat greater things in the past.
3. God will be glorified.

We can have the same confidence. It isn't that God doesn't provide for us through this. In this story, Israel finds victory in God's victory. In our lives, being united with the victory of Jesus connects us to a freedom of life. When Jesus died on the cross, He put to death the punishment of sin for His people. He took away the need to be good enough. He gave us the ability to live in obedience to His order. As we have seen: living in line with Him and with His law, here and now, provides our lives with the meaning, direction, and structure that we need to be fully human. **To be fully human is to live for God's glory.**

As you come forward for Communion today, come asking God to reveal to you the places in your life that He has prepared for you to bring glory to Him. Receive His body and blood, physical reminders of His cosmic victory, to encourage you in your daily life. Take this encouragement out and apply it to the world. Find your place, big or small, in His work to bring everything back to Himself.

**1 Timothy 1:15-17**