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*“This Uncircumcised Philistine”*

1 SAMUEL 17:1-30

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## AT A GLANCE

This familiar story of David and Goliath is not about mustering the courage to slay our own giants—it's about seeing the living God at work through faithful obedience. In this message, we explore how God positioned David—an unlikely hero on a mundane errand—to confront a terrifying enemy not with bravado, but with conviction rooted in God's presence. More than a tale of triumph, this passage points us to the greater Son, who came down not just to fight, but to deliver. Through David's story, we see how humble faithfulness and trust in the living God can change everything—even the battlefield.

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## WHY IS THIS STORY SO FAMOUS?

Why is the story of David and Goliath such a popular one? Why has it become practically synonymous with any insurmountable obstacle? The truth is the author of Samuel went to great lengths to ensure this story is memorable. From the details included that normally are not, to the amount of quotations, to the fact that this is the longest narrative of David's encounters with an enemy, the author goes to great lengths to make this story stick in our minds.

But not so we will remember this story when we're facing our own giants and take courage and overcome! Nor so we will glorify David. Rather, the author wants us to recognize the power of faithfulness to drive a man to do what no one else would and to see how the Lord used that courage of conviction to glorify His name.

So, why is David and Goliath one of the most retold stories in the world? Because it taps into something deeper than a mere underdog triumph. The author crafts it to spotlight how faith in the living God transforms the battlefield. This is not a call to face your giants. It's a call to trust the God who slays them.

## GOLIATH: A TERRIFYING CHAMPION

In **verses 1-3** Battlelines are drawn and the stage is set for one of the most epic hero stories ever told! David vs Goliath!

Let's pick up in **Verses 4-7** **And there came out from the camp of the Philistines a champion named Goliath of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span. <sup>5</sup>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. <sup>6</sup>And he had bronze armor on his legs, and a javelin of bronze slung between his shoulders. <sup>7</sup>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.**

Goliath was both massive and experienced, a **champion**. The author describes Goliath as a man standing 9'6" (or 9'9") tall. He was wrapped in impenetrable armor that weighed 125 lbs. Evidently

this weight was no concern to Goliath which means he probably weighed over 400lbs. The spear was equally impressive, weighing 15 lbs. He seems practically invulnerable. When he speaks, he inspires terror in the entire army of Israel.

In **verses 8-9** Goliath taunts Israel and invites them to send a man to fight him. If he wins, they'll be Israel's slaves and vice versa.

### SAUL: THE EMPTY SHELL OF A KING

**Verses 10-11** And the Philistine said, "I defy the ranks of Israel this day. Give me a man, that we may fight together." <sup>11</sup> When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid.

When Saul was anointed it was noted that he was tall and handsome. (1 Samuel 9:2) We also should note that he successfully commanded an army of 130,000 men in defeating the Ammonites. (1 Samuel 11:11)

So why is Saul now **dismayed and greatly afraid**? Right, "*the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul!*" <sup>1</sup> *Samuel 16:14* Saul was trying to lead God's people without God's spirit. He was a shell of a man. Empty, broken, and desperate.

There's another element we need to observe here. Israel looked at Goliath and accepted the premise that his imposing size and armor were no match for them because they failed to see as God sees.

They determined Goliath was unbeatable because he looked unbeatable. Judging by appearance bites again.

### DAVID: THE YOUNGEST, YET GOD'S CHOICE

**Verses 12-13** Describe David's family – his father, Jesse, and his seven brothers. The three oldest brothers followed Saul to the battle. **Verse 15** adds **but David went back and forth from Saul to feed his father's sheep at Bethlehem.**

David had been going back and forth from Bethlehem, his home, and Gibeah, the home of Saul, about 12-15 miles away.

The author again points out in **verse 14** **David was the youngest.** In **verse 16** we read **For forty days the Philistine came forward and took his stand, morning and evening.** Eighty times!

### A MUNDANE ERRAND WITH A DIVINE PURPOSE

**Verses 17-18** 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. <sup>18</sup> Also take these ten cheeses to the commander of their thousand. See if your brothers are well, and bring some token from them."

From a human perspective, Jesse was concerned for the welfare of his boys. He wanted a **token** in return, either a symbol that his boys were ok or a receipt for rations contributed to the war effort.

### DAVID STEPS ONTO THE BATTLEFIELD

**Verses 20-21** <sup>20</sup> 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. <sup>21</sup> And Israel and the Philistines drew up for battle, army against army.

David responded obediently to his father's command and left early in the morning and went to the Valley of Elah where the men of Israel were fighting. (v. 19)

What's peculiar is that Israel was lining up **shouting the war cry**, which evidently it had done for **forty days**, and yet nothing came of it. They went through the motions, but it was nothing but superficial showmanship.

**Verses 22-23 And David left the things in charge of the keeper of the baggage and ran to the ranks and went and greeted his brothers. <sup>23</sup> 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.**

Catch the details here. Why talk about what he did with the food? Why add that he ran to the ranks, if not to contrast the confidence and diligence of the young shepherd boy with the hesitance of the supposed warriors? David stands in contrast to the men of Israel in so many ways.

I mentioned the human perspective of Jesse. But from a divine perspective, meeting this practical need brought God's man onto the battlefield when he would otherwise have had no place there.

This time when Goliath spoke, God's man was there to hear him. We get the sense that something significant is about to happen because in going to the battlefield, David carried with him the Spirit of the Lord.

## ISRAEL TREMBLES; DAVID QUESTIONS

**Verses 24-25 All the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him and were much afraid. <sup>25</sup> 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."**

Ironically the words of King Saul did little to stir the heart of any man of Israel's army. None of them rallied to defend God's honor.

**Verses 26-27 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?" <sup>27</sup> And the people answered him in the same way, "So shall it be done to the man who kills him."**

They said he has **come up to defy Israel** (v. 25) David's perspective is that he is **defying the armies of the living God**. Israel was nothing apart from the living God. The army was nothing apart from the living God, as is being clearly portrayed.

**"For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?"** Up to this point nothing David said was recorded. The author chose to make these the first words recorded that came from the mouth of David. How epic!

What a question, **"Who is this uncircumcised Philistine?"** David calls the 9'6", 400+lb champion **"...this uncircumcised Philistine."** We're seeing essence. David was in essence a man with the spirit of the Lord. Goliath was in essence a man without Him. This difference is far more important than size.

To David it wasn't about how big his opponent was. It was about an uncircumcised man **defying** the armies of the living God and therefore, God Himself.

David's worldview is put on display: the living God makes a difference on the battlefield.

## DAVID VS. ELIAB: A HEART REVEALED

In **verses 28-30 Eliab**, the **eldest brother**, not only assumed evil intent in David, but mocked his youngest brother for obeying their father and bringing him rations!

As the story unfolds, it becomes clear David is innocent of these charges; rendering Eliab a faulty judge of character – probably because the fault was in his own heart. Eliab foreshadowed the presumption and evil heart that we will soon see in Saul. David, undeterred, turned away and repeated his question to another.

### CHRIST CONNECTION: FROM CHEESE TO THE CROSS

David was an obedient son; sent by his father. (v. 20) Jesus was an obedient son, sent by His Father. *“For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.” John 6:38*

David was sent to provide bread for his brothers and Jesus became bread for His brothers. *“I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.” John 6:35*

David faced an enemy with “scales” – the word translated “coat of mail” (17:5) who spoke blasphemous things against God. David served as the prefigured Christ - the seed of woman sent to crush the head of the serpent.

### APPLICATION: FAITHFULNESS IS DELIVERING CHEESE

We’ve read of three movements of David: from the sheep to the place of anointing in 16:12, then from the sheep to the palace in 16:21, and now from the sheep to the battlefield. This is thematic language.

In each of these movements, the hand of God is clearly at work. David had no right to be at the sacrificial meal because he wasn’t deemed worthy. He had no credentials to be in the palace as the therapeutic musician to the king. And he had no qualifications to be on the battlefield. Yet here he is as the anointed king of Israel, Saul’s musician, and soon to be Israel’s champion.

And the reader must wrestle with this. Why is David there? From a human perspective, his father sent him to deliver cheese and bread. Mundane. Insignificant. But the truth is far greater. He was there because God moved him *there*. And *then*, just as Goliath spouted his blasphemy. Right place, right time. By the hand of God.

We should learn to see God’s hand in our lives. We ought to appreciate when God moves us, even in seemingly insignificant ways. You may think you’re just running an errand; just being faithful in small things. But obedience in obscurity is often the launching pad for God’s greatest work in your life.

At times it feels like nothing more than delivering cheese and yet when we do all things for His glory, we can be sure that He is the One moving us.

### APPLICATION: FAITHFULNESS IS MORE THAN HYPE

Using the phrase **now David** and **but David** (v. 12, 15, 23, 26, 29) the author contrasts the youthful David with Goliath, the eldest of his brothers, and the armies of Israel. David is set in contrast to cause us to contemplate the difference. What makes David different?! The Lord was with him. (16:18)

It’s one thing to shout the war cry (v. 20) and another to stand with conviction that the Lord is with you and for you. You can shout and dance and clap and sing and act tough and super-spiritual all you want to. You can be the most passionate worshipper; you can speak the most beautiful Christianese and claim to have such an amazing walk with God.

But when your teeth get knocked out, the truth comes out, too. All the hype and hoopla in the world doesn’t make you a spiritual warrior. Humble, heart-felt conviction that drives your actions in the face of adversity does. Who you are when the battle rages is who you truly are.

It is for this reason that Paul (Romans 5:3ff), Peter (1 Peter 4:12ff), and James (James 1:2ff) all encourage us to remember that God uses our trials to purify us. We may worship gleefully in the good times, but we worship deeply in the tough.

Faithfulness is more than making noise and beating your shields.

### APPLICATION: FAITHFULNESS IS TRUSTING THE LIVING GOD

Goliath served gods of stone. The men of Israel had forgotten the God who split the sea. But David remembered: our God speaks, sees, & acts—He lives.

While the armies of Israel saw an impenetrable giant, David saw an uncircumcised Philistine. He was no match for the living God. David knew God as active and aware, personal and powerful. Do you know the *living* God?

Let's be clear. David was not out to prove his faith. He was out to deliver cheese. When the honor of his God was trampled upon, he simply stood with conviction. He wasn't out looking for a Goliath to slay. And David's slaying Goliath is not the point of the story.

David was going about his daily life in obedience to his father and the Lord put him in the right spot at the right time to show the world what the living God was capable of. That is the point of this story. The living God is indeed living! And He's working in your life right now just like He was working in David's!

Do you trust that the living God makes a difference on the battlefield of your life? When you're met with adversity and the enemy of your soul is showing you how big your challenge is and how impossible the situation is, do you flee in fear, or do you respond with a righteous anger that the enemy would defy your God?

If the world could read your mind in the face of adversity, let it be evident that you trust in the living God!

Next time you're up against what appears impossible, ask yourself, "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine?" It may not solve all your problems, but it is a great place to begin! Remember you serve the living God!

You don't need giant faith; just a little faith in the living God. (Luke 17:6)