

## **Seeing the Lord of the Word in the Word of the Lord**

*Jesus: Our Champion and Victorious King*

I Samuel 17

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### **INTRODUCTION**

I am sure everyone has watched the Rocky movies in here before right? I believe it was Rocky III that he had to fight Hulk Hogan in the beginning of the movie. It was truly David versus Goliath. In every movie it seemed that Rocky was the underdog. He was the David and everyone else was the Goliath. There was Mr. T, the Russian, and now in the new movie an over-the-hill Rocky has to fight a new superstar. The storyline is always a man standing up to face a battle that he shouldn't win but ultimately does.

Remember Appalachian St. and Michigan. There you had a giant of a football program in Michigan facing a team that few had ever heard of. The giant walked in to confident and the little guy won the day.

There are numerous examples I could give of David and Goliath stories. And what the world wants us to learn from them is that we can accomplish anything if we simply believe in ourselves. That is not what God is teaching us in this narrative.

There are certain battles that we cannot win when left to ourselves. We need a champion and a king to fight and win on our behalf.

### **INTRO to Text: Setting the Stage**

In chapter 8 the people of Israel express their displeasure with the sons of Samuel who had been made judges over them. They say that the son's of Samuel do not walk in "his ways". They ask Samuel to "appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations." (8:5)

God allows Samuel to appoint a king over them, telling Samuel that they have not rejected him but have rejected God Himself as He is their King. Samuel warns the people but ultimately Israel would get the king that they asked for. They get Saul. It is Saul that Samuel would anoint as the king of Israel.

Saul would become king and lead the people of Israel in victory against the Ammonites; he would fight with the Philistines and other enemies of Israel. Although he would do some positive things, Saul would eventually come to be rejected by God. In chapter 15 Saul and Israel are commanded to utterly destroy the Amalekites. Instead of completely wiping the Amalekites out Saul and Israel spared their king Agag, kept the best animals, and all that was good. He does not follow the commands of God like he was supposed to. Because of his disobedience God rejects Saul as king and through

Samuel lets him know that the kingdom of Israel has been torn from him and will pass to another.

That “other” is David the shepherd boy. In chapter 16 Samuel would go to the house of Jesse and look at each of Jesse’s sons. Not until David was brought before Samuel did God speak to Samuel and set David apart as the future king of Israel. Although David would be anointed the king he would not immediately take over that role. Instead he first enters into the service of Saul. David the future king would be a servant first as he would bear the armor of Saul.

It is in during this time as the armor-bearer of Saul that the armies of Israel would come face to face with seemingly insurmountable odds. They stand in the way of the armies of Philistia and a giant named Goliath. It is here that we join the story.

### **The Text: The Two Armies Take Positions**

*“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. And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered, and encamped in the Valley of Elah, and drew up for battle against the Philistines.” (17:1-2)*

The two nations had battled for some time. This wasn’t the first time that Israel had fought with Philistia and it wasn’t the first time Saul as king had to lead the nation of Israel against the Philistine army. Saul was a man that the Bible says “fought against all his enemies on every side..”! He was a king that delivered Israel from the hands of their enemies. So, it was nothing new for the men of Israel to be preparing for battle at the command of Saul.

From the recent success that Israel had in the past it would be safe to say they were probably pretty confident. They had defeated the Philistines before and could do so again! So the “drew up for battle”! The army of Israel on one side of the mountain and the army from Philistia on the other. You can imagine the stare down that was taking place. Both armies popping their knuckles, tightening their laces, making sure that their equipment was ready to go. The fight was looming large!

### **The Text: The Giant Steps Forward!**

*“And there came out from the camp of the Philistines a champion named Goliath of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span....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’.” (17:4; 8)*

Here the narrator introduces us to a giant of a man from the Philistine army. Goliath steps out and Israel looks across the mountain at a man that would have stood 9ft tall. He is described as having a massive amount of armor on his body. A helmet of bronze, coat of mail (metal), armor on his legs, a spear made with a tree and a massive

piece of iron. Here is a man that was ready to take on anybody at anytime. And it makes it known.

Goliath steps up to the front of the line and issues a challenge to the Israelite people. He says to send them their champion....choose your best....who is your homerun hitter....is there a Maximus among you....if so then send that man my way.

Goliath had defied the ranks of Israel and the terror had run through them like a cancer. They were “dismayed and greatly afraid.”

During all this David was going back and forth between Saul, his father Jesse, and his brothers. He was the armor-bearer to Saul but still a son and a brother. He would go and tend the sheep of his father and then come again to Saul and his brothers who were fighting with the army of Israel.

All the while, for 40 days, Goliath would come out and wait for anyone to accept the challenge that he had put forth. Would Israel find anyone that could fight with this giant?

### **The Text: David Hears the Giant!**

*“As he talked with them, behold, the champion, the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name, came up and spoke the same words as before. And David heard him.” (17:23)*

Jesse had sent David back to Saul and his brothers with specific commands to check in on them. He was to take them some food and then bring back something from them to their father. David leaves the sheep with another shepherd, gathers the supplies and heads to his brothers.

When David arrives the army is going out for battle. He leaves the provisions he had brought in the care of another and rushes to the battle front. He finds his brothers! You can imagine the scene. The little brother is there, the brothers greet him, hugging him and urging him to return to the camp for his own safety. But as they stand there talking to him Goliath makes his morning announcement.

The men of Israel hear what Goliath has to say and they are terrified once more. They had drawn up for battle but the moment the enemy raised his ugly head and came out to meet them they fled.

*“All the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him and were much afraid.” (17:24)*

The talking among the fleeing men is rampant. “Did you see the size of that guy?” “His spear was huge, you could use that to kill an elephant!” “He must have had a ton of armor on!” All the talk made it’s way to the ears of David. Evidently Saul had said that he would reward the one who could defeat the Philistine Giant! This grabs David’s attention.

*“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, the he should defy the armies of the living God?’.” (17:26)*

David asks the question and the men answer. The king would “enrich the man, give him his daughter as a wife, and make his father’s house free.” That was the reward for killing this giant. And through David’s questioning he implicitly offers to fight this giant.

When the eldest brother hears this he rebukes David. David had made a bold and somewhat cocky statement. Here is the youngest brother who is offering to fight this giant. Eliab questions the motives of David.

*“Why have you come down?...I know your presumption and the evil of your heart, for you have come down to see the battle.” (17:28)*

The elder brother accuses David of having allterior motives for coming to see his brothers. He wasn’t coming for them at all, instead he came so that he could fight and gain honor for himself. But David’s response is respectful yet firm. He answers his brother with a question and then turns and asks another group the same question and he gets the same answer.

### **The Text: Saul Hears the Bravado of David**

*“When the words that David spoke were heard, they repeated them before Saul, and he sent for him.” (17:31)*

Here is a young shepherd boy that comes up to bring his warrior brothers some food and he has the nerve to offer himself as the champion from Israel that will come out to fight the champion from Philistia! David did not resemble a champion, he was not a powerful looking man. He was a handsome man but probably not very big. He has been an simple shepherd his whole life, an armor-bearer to the king, not a warrior. But that does not detour David.

*“And David said to Saul, ‘Let no man’s heart fail because of him. Your servant will go and fight with this Philistine’.”(17:32)*

Once in the presence of the king David wastes no time. He displays his willingness to fight this giant on behalf of Israel. He will stand as their champion and defeat this enemy of God’s people. But Saul is hesitant. David you are only a youth! You can’t fight this battle. You are a brave boy indeed, but you’re not ready for this. David’s response is sobering.

**(Read 17:34-37)**

David has killed both lions and bears in protecting the sheep of his father Jesse. He will kill this giant and protect the sheep of the God of Israel. He doesn't point to his own strength as the reason for his confidence. Instead he attributes all the ability to the God who reigns supreme over all the events throughout history. This is the God who delivered him from the mouth of the lion and bear and this is the God who will deliver him from the hand of this giant from Philistia. Saul concedes, *"Go, and the Lord be with you!"*

**The Text: The Champion of Israel Meets the Champion of Philistia**

*"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. And the Philistine moved forward and came near to David, with his shield-bearer in front of him." (17:40-41)*

You can imagine the armies of Israel watching as the battle is about to rage. The giant and his shield-bearer move toward David. They stop short of one another, one more chance to talk some trash! Goliath will curse David and make fun of the weapons he has chosen. David will stand strong in his confidence of the God of Israel.

*"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.'" (17:45)*

Goliath had not simply defied the army of Israel but he had defied the very God of the universe. It is this God who David served and it was this God who would give victory to David.

The men move closer, they begin to run towards the battle line. David grabs a stone and slings it at the giant. The stone meets with the giant's forehead, sinks into it, and cripples the giant. He is down. David is not finished. He may be down but David will make sure that his Philistine who has defied his God will never do so again. David picks up the sword of Goliath and off comes his head. The enemy of Israel, the enemy of God, has been destroyed.

**The Text: Israel Rises Up Behind their Champion and Victor!**

*"When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled. 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." (17:51-52)*

When the men of Israel see their champion has defeated this giant, the champion from Philistia, they rise up in confidence and follow their champion into battle. The enemies of Israel will be run out of the country by a people who have watched their champion and anointed king win the day.

## **The Text: David Our Example!**

When we look at this story we see David display some characteristics that we need to imitate. The Bible tells us to pay attention to the faith of those who come before us and it does us well to pay attention to David when he displays a righteous character. There are two things we can take from David in this narrative.

### **1. David was zealous for the glory of God. (17:26;30)**

Twice David displays a disgust for the man who would defy his God. To defy God was to proclaim one's supremacy over the Lord. It was blasphemy. David would not stand by and watch as the glory of God was dishonored. Do we?

The New Testament is filled with passages that call us to fight for our faith. We are to "contend" as Jude writes, "for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints." (Jude 1:3) Paul calls us to be "good soliders", to "fight the good fight". We are admonished to defend our faith. That is a faith that is rooted in the God of Creation who has chosen to save us from our sins through His Son. It is that God whom we should be zealous for.

Are we willing to stand in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds and defend the glory of our God? Will we stand up and defend our God when those around us curse Him and say He doesn't exist? We would do well imitate David on this point!

### **2. David was confident in the sovereignty of God. (17:31-37; 41-47)**

When David addresses Saul he mentions his victories over the lion and the bear. In both those victories he acknowledges that it is the Lord who delivered the victory, not his own ability. The same would be true when he meets this giant from Philistia.

Again, when David is face to face with this giant, he let's the Philistine know that it is God who will deliver the victory. God Himself will make sure that the giant falls and Israel stands. Because this is the God who reigns over every event in the history of the world.

David was a man that fought his battles with confidence in a God who was in control. We live in an age of ideologies that say God doesn't know the future but only acts based on our decisions. That is no god at all! I could never confidently follow a god who isn't sure about the future! How would he know we would win in the end? He couldn't be sure.

But that is not the god we follow. We follow the God who is "perfect in knowledge" (Job 37:16). Because we follow a God who knows all things and controls all things.

*“Remember this and stand firm, recall it to mind, you transgressors, remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purposes...” (Isaiah 46:8-10)*

That is the God that David was confident in and that is the God where our confidence should lie.

### **Conclusion: Jesus Our Champion and King!**

The fact is however that we are not as zealous as we should be for the glory of God, and our confidence in God waivers when it shouldn't. In this narrative we would be better suited to identify with the army of Israel that cowers in the face of an enemy they believe they can't defeat.

When a the first-century church would have read this narrative I believe they would have identified with the army. They couldn't identify with David! Why? Because in chapter 16 David is anointed the king of Israel. They and we can't identify with that!

The nation of Israel cowers in the face of this enemy and what they need is a champion, a king who will win the day for them. What they get is a champion in an unlikely character. They get the shepherd boy who steps in as their champion and king and defeats the enemy that stands before them.

As fallen humanity we stand face to face with Sin and Death. Two enemies that we cannot defeat! We are in bondage to sin and death will sting all men! What we need is a champion, a king who will step in and defeat our enemies. That Champion and King comes in an unlikely character. He comes in the form of a servant, one who is humble and meek, yet zealous and confident. Our Champion and King is Jesus, who steps in and defeats the giants of Sin and Death at the cross and empty tomb.

Now, we rise up behind a victorious Champion and King and follow Him into battle. Fighting the enemies of darkness behind a King who has already secured the victory.