

# Facing the Giants

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let's turn our Bibles to 1 Samuel chapter 17.

! We have five daughters.

They are 15, almost 16, 14 in a week, 11, and we have twin 9-year-olds. So there are a lot of words that are said in my house, especially around bedtime.

For those of you who are a girl or you are related to a girl, you know what I'm talking about. So, and it's a huge blessing. They're all great.

I love them so much. They bring a lot of joy to our lives. And like I said, we've been in Oklahoma for 10 years, and I love being here. We love Oklahoma Baptists. This morning in 1 Samuel 17, we're going to talk about facing our giants.

[ 1 : 18 ] This is a story, the story of David and Goliath. This is a really popular story. I'd be surprised, even if this is the first time you've ever set foot in a church, I would be surprised if you haven't heard of David and Goliath.

David is a teenager who goes and takes a slingshot and five smooth stones and, spoiler alert, defeats a giant named Goliath.

This is a story that's captured the imagination of generations. It's a story that's popular in our culture. It's a story that's probably popular and might have even been used last night in high school football locker rooms around the country, right?

The underdog goes in the locker room. The coach says, hey, listen, I know you're David right now, and you're looking out at Goliath going, how can we ever win? But just like David took up those five smooth stones, we got a wide receiver.

We got another wide receiver. We got a tight end and running back and a quarterback. There's five, right? And we're going to go out and beat Goliath. So this is a story that has captured our imaginations. It's a story that people use to talk about all kinds of challenges in their life, not just in sports.

[ 2 : 22 ] We talk about having Goliaths in our life in terms of the challenges that we face in our jobs, in our homes, in our relationships, in our finances, in our difficulties.

It's a story that inspires people to face those challenges. It's a story that inspires people to face their giants. This morning, what I want us to see is that there's something more fundamental going on here.

The giant that David faces is pointing us forward to the giant that we all face, the giant of sin and death. And there's only one person who can face and defeat that giant, and it's not me or you.

Let's read together 1 Samuel 17. I better read. This is a long chapter, so I'm going to read verses 1 through 18, and then I'm going to jump forward to verses 32 through 52.

So you want to stand in the honor of the reading of God's word. Now the Philistines gathered their armies for battle, and they were gathered at Succah, which belongs to Judah, and encamped between Succah and Azekah in Ephes-demim.

[ 3 : 42 ] 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. 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.

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 had a helmet of bronze on his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail, and the weight of the coat was 5,000 shekels of bronze.

And he had bronze armor on his legs, and a javelin of bronze slung between his shoulders. The shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and his spear's head weighed 600 shekels of iron, and his shield-bearer went before him.

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.

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. And the Philistines said, I defy the ranks of Israel this day.

[ 4 : 40 ] Give me a man that we may fight together. When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid. Now David was the son of an Ephrathite of Bethlehem and Judah named Jesse, who had eight sons.

In the days of Saul, the man was already old and advanced in years. 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.

David was the youngest. The three eldest followed Saul, but David went back and forth from Saul to feed his father's sheep at Bethlehem. For forty days the Philistine came forward and took his stand morning and evening.

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. Also take these ten cheeses to the commander of their thousands.

See if your brothers are well and bring some token from him. Let's jump to verse 32. David said to Saul, Let no man's heart fail because of him.

[ 5 : 40 ] Your servant will go and fight this Philistine. 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. 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, 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. 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. 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.

Then Saul clothed David with his armor. He put a helmet of bronze on his head and clothed them with a coat of mail. 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. 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.

[ 6 : 52 ] And the Philistine moved forward and came near to David with his shield-bearer in front of him. And when the Philistine looked and saw David, he disdained him, for he was but a youth, ruddy and handsome in appearance.

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. 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.

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. 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, 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. When the Philistine arose and came and drew near to meet David, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine.

[ 7 : 59 ] And David put his hand in his bag, and he took out a stone and slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell on his face to the ground. So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone and struck the Philistine and killed him.

There was no sword in the hand of David. 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. Don't find that in the children's Bibles.

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 Sha'arim as far as Gath and Ekron.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Let me pray for us. God, thank you for your word. We pray that by your spirit you would conform us more into your son's image today so that we might glorify you.

And we ask these things in Christ's name. Amen. So there are a few things that I want us to see about this story in order for us to understand exactly what God wants us to hear from it.

[ 9 : 06 ] The first thing that I want us to pay attention to is the context of this battle. The context of this battle. We see in verse 1, very simply, the Philistines are gathering their armies for battle.

They were gathered at this particular spot at Succah, which belongs to Judah, and encamped between Succah and Azekah and Ephes-Demim. We learn in verse 2 that this place is a valley and that the Philistine army is encamped on one side and the Israelite army is encamped on the other side.

Now, that's not all the context that he gives us, though, because this is part of an ongoing story of Israel. This story isn't just kind of a drop-in where we learn about a really cool fight that David had. This story is part of the story of Israel that's been going on really since Genesis 12, but especially at this point since the book of Joshua and really since the book of Exodus.

In the book of Samuel, the context for this story is that Israel has been unsuccessful in defeating the enemies that are in the land of Canaan.

[ 10 : 16 ] They have failed to drive out the people of the land. God, at the beginning of 1 Samuel, God isn't speaking to Israel. Eli and his two sons especially are wicked.

There is no word from the Lord. Israel is deprived of God's leadership. And then he sends them Samuel, the prophet. But they continue not to listen to Samuel.

They continue to fail. They continue to disobey God, to turn from his word, to turn from the things he's commanded. And they suffer a number of military defeats throughout Samuel's leadership.

And then they say, they finally have a victory. And they say, you know what? What we really want, even though we just won this victory because we followed God's rules, what we really want now is a king.

A king like the nations who can fight our battles for us. So once again, they're being unfaithful to God. They say we want a king like the nations around them, right?

[ 11 : 18 ] They're not supposed to be like the nations around them, but they want a king like the nations. And so God says, okay, I'll give you somebody. Here's a guy named Saul. And if you read Saul's story, and I say this very kindly because I also am one of these.

Saul is a big dummy. And Saul continually fails throughout his kingship. The first story we read about him is he's looking for his daddy's donkeys in the hills, and he can't find him, so he's a bad shepherd.

Then he has an anxiety attack right before a battle because Samuel hasn't gotten there yet. And so he makes a sacrifice on his own, which he isn't supposed to do. And he wants to manipulate God into giving him a victory.

So he's a bad priest. Then he makes this really dumb vow where he says, all right, we're going to go into battle. And anybody who eats food while we're in battle is going to die. His son Jonathan wasn't there when he made that vow.

Now his son Jonathan is like frolicking in a field and finds some honey, eats some honey. And Saul says, whoops, I'm not going to kill you. Sorry. He's a bad prophet. And then right before this story in chapter 15, he's a bad king.

[ 12 : 24 ] Because they go and they finally win a victory against the Amalekites. And instead of doing what God had told them to do, which is to totally destroy the nations in the land, instead of doing what God told them to do, Saul keeps some of the spoil for himself.

And so at this point in the story, Israel has completely failed under the kingship of Saul. They're sitting in this valley when God has removed his hand of anointing off of the kingship of Saul, just basically waiting to get defeated.

We actually need to widen the scope a little bit, though, because this is part of an even larger story of the story of the Bible. Where it's not just Saul that fails.

It's all of humanity who fails consistently to keep God's word, to keep God's law. In Genesis 1 and 2, God made human beings to be fruitful and multiply, to fill the earth with God's image bearers, to rule over his place, to cultivate and keep his land, and to obey his word.

But they fail. Adam and Eve fail. God kicks them out of the land, but he says, one day I'm going to send a seed of woman who will save you. One day I'm going to send the seed of woman who's going to crush the serpent's head, the source of sin.

[13:49] One day I'm going to come and I'm going to restore what Adam lost. He promises Israel he'll do this through the promises he makes to Abraham. And so not only is Israel waiting for a king at this point to lead them, they're also waiting for their Messiah to save them.

This story is set within the context of Israel waiting for their king, a real king. A king who's not a bad shepherd and a bad priest and a bad prophet and a bad king.

Israel, along with the world, is waiting for the seed of woman to come and save them from the serpent, the one who brought sin into the world, the one who brought brokenness into the world, the one who has not yet been defeated by anybody who represents Israel, not by Abraham or Isaac or Jacob or Moses.

Israel and humanity have failed over and over and over again, and we're just waiting on someone. The one to come and crush the serpent's head.

And now, more specifically in 1 Samuel, we're waiting on the king to come and bring victory for Israel. There's a couple of other things to notice about this context for the battle.

[15:14] This valley, the valley of Elah, that the writer mentions here at the very beginning, is a really significant military valley. It is strategically important.

We said that the Philistines are on one side and the Israelites on the other side. And whoever wins this battle is going to have basically free access in and out of their enemy's territory.

If Israel wins, that's basically the key to defeating the rest of the Philistines. If the Philistines win, they have free reign in southern Israel, which is really meaning to say they have free reign throughout Israel as soon as they can move troops that far.

This is a militarily significant strategic battle. And it's not just that, but it's also covenantally significant. And this is the most important context for this whole thing.

This battle matters because if Israel loses, they lose the land. That's that military significance. This is the land that God gave them, that God showed to Abraham.

[16:25] This is the land that he promised to them. If they lose, they lose it. And not only that, not only do they lose the land, but they lose their status as a people. What does Goliath say?

Did you notice what he says to them? If you win, we'll become your servants. But if I win, Israel, you become our servants or slaves.

This is like the Exodus would have never happened. Israel has failed over and over and over and over again, starting with Adam, moving through Isaac and Jacob into Moses, under the leadership of Moses in the wilderness for 40 years, through the wanderings.

Now in Joshua and Judges, they failed. And Goliath is saying, I'm about to take you back into slavery.

This is the lowest of low points at this very moment. The context of this battle is that it is incredibly important in terms of the covenant promises of God.

[17:39] It's important for the covenant promises of God to Israel related to the promised land. It's important even beyond that scope to the covenant promises that God made to Adam and Eve when he said, I'm going to send you a seed of woman.

The second thing I want you to notice is the characters that are in this battle. The characters that are in this battle. So there's a few of these. There's only a few. We're not going to talk about David's brothers.

They're characters, but they're part of Israel at this point. So there are a few characters here. First of all, we meet Goliath. Goliath is a giant of a man. Some people would tell you he's around nine feet tall.

I think that's right. There are others who would say he's like six, seven. That's still really tall, but I think it's more like nine feet. This guy is what we would consider a giant of a man.

Not only is he a giant of a man, but look at his armor in verse five. He has a helmet of bronze on his head. He was armed with a coat of mail.

[ 18 : 41 ] The weight of that coat was 5,000 shekels. He had bronze armor on his legs and a javelin and then a sword. This is the representative of the enemy of the people of God.

Goliath is the person who stands out in front as the person who represents the enemy of the people of God. And he's a huge guy.

He looks undefeatable. And his armor, if you were to read this and look at the Hebrew words that are used, his armor, it's actually describing him with the word that is also used for scales of a snake. He's got two large pointy things. You guys get the picture? This guy looks like a snake. Looks like a big giant snake. Maybe like a dragon. And he curses Israel, right?

We read in the second half of the chapter, we read over in verse 43 that Goliath curses David and all of Israel.

[ 20 : 01 ] This is a representative of the enemies of God who looks like a giant snake and who curses the people of God.

On the other hand, another character in this story is Saul. Saul also is tall. If you were to look back at 1 Samuel 9 when Saul comes onto the scene, Saul is introduced as tall and handsome.

He looks the part. He looks like someone who can go out and fight our battles for us. That's what Israel wants. Israel says, we want a king like the nations who can go out and fight our battles. Well, here's your chance, Saul.

Here's your chance. You're tall. You're taller than the rest of Israel. You're at least a head taller. You're not nine feet tall, but you're a pretty big dude. You're a pretty big dude. Saul has armor, right?

In the first part of the second half of the chapter that we read, verses 32 through 39, Saul tries to put his own armor onto David.

[ 21 : 10 ] So Saul is a guy who looks the part. He has the weapons to try to fight fire with fire. But Saul, like the rest of all of Israel, is afraid.

That's the third character in this story is just all Israel. All of Israel in this story is afraid. We didn't read verses 19 through 31, but if you read it, you would hear over and over again that all Israel was afraid.

They respond with fear and trembling. When they see the enemy of God, instead of doing what they were supposed to do, instead of doing what God called them to do and the conquest commands, which is to go out and that the Lord will fight your battles for you, instead they respond with fear and trembling.

What's ironic about that is that that's exactly how God says the nations will respond when God goes before Israel to conquer them. Israel is just another faithless nation at this point.

Saul represents that. Israel is afraid. Saul is afraid. Israel won't go into battle. Saul won't go into battle. Israel is thinking about this battle in terms of the tools of warfare and still won't go in.

[ 22 : 36 ] Saul possesses the tools of that current day's warfare and won't go into battle. Israel responds with fear. But then finally, we have David.

And David is another representative for Israel, but this is a representative for Israel who responds not in fear, but in faith. Israel responds in fear.

David responds in faith. Israel and Saul want to put on their own armor and see if it will defeat their enemy. David says, your armor doesn't fit.

All I need is God. Israel thinks it's foolish to go out and try to fight this giant Philistine.

David uses foolish means to defeat him. A sling and a stone. Israel wants to give up on this covenantally significant battle.

[ 23 : 39 ] David, as God's representative, wins it for them, not because he has better military prowess, but because he relies on the Lord for the victory.

And that brings me to the final thing that I want you to see out of this passage, and then we'll talk about how this relates to us. I want you to see the quality of the battle. So we've talked about the context, the characters, and now the quality of the battle, and we just hinted at it.

The quality of this battle is that Israel is facing total destruction by a seemingly insurmountable enemy who's represented by a giant snake.

God, on the other hand, brings the victory through his own representative, David from the tribe of Judah, who wins not through strength or might or sword or spear, but through the most foolish

means possible, a shepherd boy with a sling.

David, from the tribe of Judah, brings victory over God's enemies. And he brings victory because he relies on the Lord.

[ 25 : 05 ] Now, what's happening with this story? What's happening with this story? What's happening is that this story about David and Goliath is pointing us beyond itself.

We're being pointed beyond this story to the story, right? David is not the savior of Israel. I don't know if you guys have read past 1 Samuel 17, but spoiler alert, David messes up big time.

David, after this story, there's a number of successes, but he starts doing weird stuff, even in 1 Samuel. He starts like dressing up as a crazy person and hiding among the Philistines.

He is a bloodthirsty guy, even in 1 Samuel. And then by the time you get to 2 Samuel, he does all kinds of things that we're not gonna go into detail about, but like adultery, murder, not being a good father.

David turns into a bad shepherd just like Saul was a bad shepherd. David isn't the answer, but David points us to the answer. See, this battle, this battle that we have here is a battle between one representative of God's enemies and one representative of God's people.

[ 26 : 32 ] This battle is between a giant snake and a good shepherd from the tribe of Judah.

This battle is, what's at stake in this battle? It's death and destruction, on the one hand, from Goliath, or life and prosperity and peace in the land if David wins.

This battle is won by taking the enemy's own weapon and using it against him to crush his head.

David hits him with the sling, but then what does he do?

He goes and takes Goliath's sword and chops his head off. Now, I want you to think about that for a minute, right? Because when we think about facing our giants, we think, what's being taught in this story is for me to identify the giant in my life and then I need to have a new faith to overcome it.

What's actually happening here, what God is pointing us to here is that not everything in your life is a Goliath, but you know what it is? Sin and death.

[ 27 : 46 ] You know what's been the enemy from the beginning? Sin and death. Do you know what's characterized, pictured as a snake from the beginning? Sin and death. There was a literal serpent who talked to Adam and Eve and brought sin into the world.

And the consequences of sin, which are death. The Goliath that we all face, the Goliath that we all need to wonder, how do we defeat this Goliath, is the Goliath of sin and death.

And he's, he's a giant. Death is a giant. Sin is a giant. They look undefeatable.

They're a foe that looks insurmountable. If we fail to defeat them, we too face death. And yet, what does God do for us?

What does God do in response to sin and death? What does God do in order to save us from death? He sends his own son, not just the son of Jesse, but the son of God, who is the son of David from the tribe of Judah.

[ 29 : 03 ] And this son of David lives the life that we can't before God, and then he takes up the enemy's own weapon. He takes up death itself on a cross and dies the death that we deserve.

Doing so, in doing so, he takes the enemy's own weapon and in the resurrection, he defeats him with it. This is the good news that you and I, we can't defeat Goliath on our own.

You and I don't have the weapons needed. All we have is our own armor, just like Saul, and that's not sufficient. But what Jesus does on our behalf is he takes the weapons of the enemy, he uses foolish means.

What does it even mean for God to die on a cross in the person of his son? That makes no sense. You're right, it doesn't make any sense. Just like it made no sense for David to take up a sling and five stones.

This is what Paul says in Galatians. The cross is foolishness to the Greeks and the Jews. But it's wisdom to those of us who believe because in this foolish means of the crucifixion, the bloody death of God the Son incarnate, what he has done is he died the death we deserve and so taken away the sting and penalty of death by bearing our sins for us.

[ 30 : 29 ] This is the good news. You can't beat Goliath. Jesus already has. In his death and resurrection, Jesus has already crushed the serpent's head.

In Jesus' death and resurrection, he has already dealt the fatal blow and made sure that the enemy will never rise again. In Jesus' death and resurrection, in his own dying and rising again, he has provided the victory.

He is the representative of God's people because he is God the Son in the flesh, born of the Father eternally, but also born of David through the Virgin Mary.

And this Israelite, this representative of God's people has destroyed the enemy that you and I face. What does Paul say about death? It's the last enemy, but Jesus has already defeated him.

This is good news, folks. I worry sometimes, I wonder, if when we think about the battles of our life, we both make them too big and too small at the same time.

[ 31 : 45 ] When I'm talking to my students about this, I use the example, and this is the stage of life that they're in. It's not necessarily the stage of life you're in. But, you know, if they read this story and they want to talk about a Goliath in their life, they start talking about a particular class maybe that they're taking.

They start talking about, you know, the fact that they can't find a girlfriend. They start talking about the fact that, you know, they want to raise at work, but it's not coming.

All of those are challenges. And you're facing challenges also in life. But those challenges that I just listed, just basic challenges of everyday life, those aren't Goliath.

Goliath is temptation to sin. Goliath is the penalty of death for sin. And the good news is that Jesus has defeated it. So I want to ask you, what are you facing today?

I want you to think about that for a minute. Not in terms of the everyday challenges of life under a broken world. But what are the challenges you're facing related to sin and death?

[ 32 : 57 ] Are you facing temptation in a certain area of your life? Are you facing temptation with respect to drugs or pornography? Greed?

Pride? That's an enemy that's been defeated, folks. Are you facing fear of death?

Are you fearful of a disease? Are you fearful of a condition that may or may not take your life at any given moment? Are you fearful that based on the way that your life has gone so far, you might be susceptible to one of those diseases, those conditions?

Are you facing doubt because of an experience of a loved one related to death? All of those are really true enemies.

And the good news is that Jesus has defeated our enemy, sin and death. And when you face temptation, when you feel fear, when you have doubts, it's not up to you to solve that.

[ 34 : 18 ] Jesus has already solved it for you and your job is to look to him and ask for his help. This story is not telling us to have faith in our own faith.

That's worthless. This story is prompting us to have faith in the only one who has defeated the true Goliath of sin and death and it's Jesus Christ.

I want to encourage you this morning. I mean, I feel like that's a weight off of my back. So often when we read stories like this, we think that the point is for you to just kind of muscle up more faith. Muscle up more obedience. And to be sure, God is calling you to respond in faith and obedience, but it's not in reliance on your own power. It's to trust in his power and his alone to save you.

There are some of you in the room perhaps who don't know Jesus yet and the challenge today for you isn't to, when you face temptation or when you think about death, to continue to trust in Jesus.

[ 35 : 26 ] It's to trust in him for the first time. If you don't know Jesus in this room, if you've never turned from your sin and turned to him, there is a giant in your life. And if you rely on your own power to overcome him, you will fail.

And the wages of your sin, the wages of your rebellion is death. So today, the invitation for you is to respond in repentance, to turn from your sin and to trust in Jesus alone to forgive you.

If you're an unbeliever in the room, I want to encourage you today to understand that there is no way you can defeat the Goliath of sin and death on your own. You can't obey enough. You can't be kind enough.

You can't do enough good deeds to outweigh, to overcome your insufficiency to save yourself.

Saul knew he couldn't beat Goliath. You can't either. David actually knew he couldn't beat Goliath. The difference between Saul and David is Saul kept turning from the Lord for salvation.

[ 36 : 32 ] David turned to the Lord for salvation and trusted him. If you're lost today, that's the invitation for you. Turn to Christ. He's the only one who can save. You can't save yourself. And if you're a believer in the room, my invitation for you is very simple.

In whatever you're facing related to temptation, sin, and death, if it's a temptation that you continually succumb to this week, if it's a pattern of sin you find yourself falling into, or if it's fear of death or doubt about God's goodness in the face of death, I want to encourage you, turn to Jesus

today.

He's already won the victory. Turn to him and let him bring victory to your life. Let me pray for us. God, we thank you for your word. We thank you for the ways in which you encourage and equip us through it.

God, I pray today that you would help us to turn to you and to trust you to save us. We can't save ourselves. Saul and David both knew it, but Saul kept turning to himself in fear.

God, help us to turn to you in faith. Help us, Lord, to respond not by having faith in our own faith, but by having faith in you.

[ 37 : 46 ] You've already won the victory in your death and resurrection. Help us, Lord, to trust in you and you alone in moments of temptation, in moments of doubt, in moments of fear.

Help us to trust in you, your goodness, and in your work. We ask it in Christ's name. Amen.