

# **SEVEN BATTLES IN THE BIBLE**

## **Lesson Six**

### **David and Goliath**

#### **1 Samuel 17**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Perhaps the best known battle in the Bible is that of David's battle against Goliath, which is recorded in 1 Samuel chapter 17. The site of this battle, the Valley of Elah, still stands today with its green rolling hills. The Philistines, who were constant enemies of Israel during this period, assembled their army on a mountain and on an opposite mountain stood the army of Israel. (1 Samuel 17:3)

A champion fighter went out from the camp of the Philistines named Goliath. Goliath was a large man, six cubits and a span, which meant that he was anywhere from 8'5" to 9'2", and he had armor and weapons to match his size. Different sources give different estimates, but Goliath's armor and weapons together probably weighed somewhere between 150 and 200 pounds. This was a big man, and strong enough to carry and use these huge weapons. Goliath issued a bold challenge to the army of Israel. (1 Samuel 17:4-9)

When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid. (1 Samuel 17:11). Without question, this was Goliath's exact intention in issuing the challenge. The reason why he came out with full battle equipment and paraded in front of the Israelite army was because he wanted them to be dismayed and greatly afraid. Goliath's plan was to defeat the Israelites on fear alone. In any contest,

it's always useful to demoralize your opponent and strike fear in their heart for two important reasons. First, it may keep a person from ever going to battle with you because they are too afraid. Second, if they do decide to fight but are fighting with fear, the chances of them winning are slim to none. This is a significant strategy of the devil against believers. He places fear in us so that we will either not fight at all, or if we dare to fight we cannot win if we are afraid.

Saul had every reason to be afraid. Goliath was the giant among the Philistines and Saul was head and shoulder taller than other Israelite men (1 Samuel 9:2). Saul was the logical choice to square off against Goliath, and we can expect he knew others expected him to fight Goliath. But as the battle loomed Saul was "dismayed and greatly afraid." At one time Saul was known as a fierce and successful military leader (1 Samuel 14:52). But that was before the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul (1 Samuel 16:14). As the Spirit left Saul so did his courage.

David, the youngest of eight brothers, would split his time between the palace and pasture. It seems that David was only called to the palace as needed, when Saul was afflicted by the distressing spirit. (1 Samuel 17:12-15). Day after day for forty days, Goliath taunted and mocked the armies of Israel, exposing them all (and especially Saul) as cowards. (1 Samuel 17:16). David's father, Jesse, sends David on an errand to carry food to his brothers, who were engaged in battle against the Philistines, and to find out how the battle was going. (1 Samuel 17:17-18). It was while David was talking with his brothers that Goliath appeared, and all the men of Israel fled and were afraid. (1 Samuel 17:23). The situation had become so desperate that Saul needed to offer a three-part bribe

including a cash award, a princess, and a tax exemption – to induce someone, anyone to fight and win against Goliath. (1 Samuel 17:25).

Other soldiers focused on the danger of the battle or the material rewards to be won. It seems that David alone focused on the reputation of Israel and the honor of the living God. This truly shows David to be a man after God's own heart. He cared about the things that God cared about. He saw the problem in spiritual terms, not in material or fleshly terms. (1 Samuel 17:26).

When David spoke up you would have thought that his brothers would have been proud of him, but instead David's oldest brother became angry with him. (1 Samuel 17:28). But why was he angered? First, he was angry because he felt David was an insignificant, worthless person who had no right to speak up, especially with such bold words. Second, he was angry because he felt he knew David's motivation but he didn't really know David's heart. And third, he was angry because he thought David tried to provoke someone else into fighting Goliath just so that he could see a battle. Eliab himself was a tall man of good appearance (1 Samuel 16:7), and he may have also felt that David was trying to push him into battle.

Without question, Eliab's reaction to David may have hurt David's feelings but it did not deter him. David stuck to his position. David was concerned with God's cause before everything. Before his own personal safety, before his own personal glory, before his only personal honor, he had a passionate concern for God's cause. When David was misunderstood and publicly rebuked by his own brother, probably amid the laughs of the other soldiers, he could have quit. But he showed the strength of the armor of God in his

life and replied rightly. He didn't care about his glory or success, but only for the glory and success of the Lord's cause.

### **THE BATTLE**

Saul later hears what David has said. (1 Samuel 17:31) But Saul seeks to persuade David not to fight. (1 Samuel 17:33). How unfortunate, Saul was too afraid to fight, but at the same time he wanted to discourage David from fighting. Saul thought David was disqualified because of his age, size, and inexperience. This shows that Saul looked at the battle purely in natural, outward terms. The outward "tale of the tape" said there was no way David could win. The "tale of God's tape" said there was no way David could lose. Saul essentially told David, "He's been a soldier longer than you have been alive. How can you ever defeat him?" Again, this shows that Saul only looked at the outward, not the spiritual dimensions of this battle.

However, David understood that God had prepared him for this moment. God prepared David for this exact battle when David was a lowly shepherd. A lion attacked the lambs and David fought the lion. A bear came against the sheep and David battled the bear. All along, God prepared David to fight Goliath. How long did David prepare to fight Goliath? All of his life, up to that day. (1 Samuel 17:34-37). This is generally God's pattern for preparation. He calls us to be faithful right where we are and then uses our faithfulness to accomplish greater things. If David ran scared at the lion or the bear, he would never have been ready to fight Goliath now. But he was faithful then, so he will be faithful now.

After David said what he had to say, Saul was still focusing on the natural, in the flesh, in the things that are merely outward. He figured that if this boy were going to beat Goliath, he needed the best armor in all Israel – the armor of the king. (1 Samuel 17:38). Saul tried to put his armor on David, but it didn't work. It didn't work because Saul's armor did not *physically fit* David. Everything was too big, and David could not move well with Saul's armor. It also didn't work because Saul's armor did not *spiritually fit* David. (1 Samuel 17:39) Armor, military technology, or human wisdom would not win this battle. The Lord God of Israel would win this battle.

Often people try to fight with another person's armor. They see God do something wonderful through someone else and they try to copy it without really making it their own. God's work is never most effectively done in this way. David used the same tools he used before as a shepherd to kill the lion and the bear. What God used before, He would use again.

David choose five smooth stones to defeat Goliath. (1 Samuel 17:40). But why did David choose five stones? He only needed one to kill Goliath. Perhaps it was because Goliath had four brothers (2 Samuel 21:18-22).

Obviously, because of Goliath's size and experience, it was not a "fair" fight. Adding to that, it was two against one because Goliath had an armor bearer with him. (1 Samuel 17:41). When the Philistine looked about and saw David, he disdained him. (1 Samuel 17:42). The idea behind "looked about" is almost that Goliath had to look around to find David. David was so small compared to this man that Goliath had a hard time even seeing him. But when he did see him he disdained him. There was nothing about

David that struck fear or respect in Goliath's heart, but to the contrary Goliath felt insulted that they sent David. When Goliath asked, "Am I a dog?" it was worse than it sounds. The Hebrew word for dog (*kaleb*) is used in passages like Deuteronomy 23:18 for male homosexual prostitutes. Goliath felt that sending David was an insult to his manhood.

David said to Goliath that Goliath came to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin, but that he came in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom Goliath had defied. (1 Samuel 17:45). David makes a contrast between himself and Goliath without giving credit to Goliath himself. In other words, David was saying "Those are some pretty fancy weapons you've got there, mister. But I've got something far better than your weapons."

David is bolder and bolder. It is one thing to tell Saul he will kill Goliath (1 Samuel 17:36). It is an entirely different thing to tell Goliath he will kill Goliath, and to say the Lord would do it this day. (1 Samuel 17:46). Notice that David was bold, but bold in God not in himself. He knew the battle belonged to the Lord.

Goliath then moved forward to kill David and David hastened towards Goliath. (1 Samuel 17:48). At that very moment, David let a stone fly from his sling. (1 Samuel 17:49). Swift as an arrow it flew, and true to its mark. The next moment, the giant's huge body lay prostrate upon the ground, his forehead crushed by the sharp little stone that struck it and pierced his head. David ran up to the giant and stood upon his body. Having no sword of his own, David drew the giant's sword and cut his head off. (1 Samuel 17:50-51).

When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled. Saul's armies, regaining their confidence and courage, pursued them with might and mane. It was a great and lasting victory. (1 Samuel 17:52-54).

**POINTS TO REMEMBER:**

1. The battle requires courage.
2. The battle requires preparation.
3. The battle is not natural but spiritual.
4. The battle is not yours but God's.