

1 Samuel 17:1-58 | “A Man in Between”

*Preached on February 20, 2022 by Pastor Matt Brown*

Please turn in your Bibles to 1 Samuel 17, as this morning we will learn about the famous story of David & Goliath. *[pause]*

The story of David & Goliath is a story that has reverberated throughout the ages as one of the most well-known stories in the Bible.

Who doesn't like a story of an underdog beating the big, mean enemy? *[pause]*

But here's the thing: although this story is well-known, that doesn't mean that it's properly understood and applied. *[pause]*

To understand what I mean, just consider how our world uses the David & Goliath story...

I did a simple search on the internet, and I want you to listen to these two article titles to see what I mean...

One said, “Locals Engaged in ‘David and Goliath’ Battle.”<sup>1</sup>

And another one was: “David and Goliath: How a Tiny Organization is Taking On the Bike Theft Industry.”<sup>2</sup> *[pause]*

Get this: I even found a nonreligious, creative agency that named itself, “David & Goliath.”

And on their website, they state their mission statement as this: “to be brave to inspire people and brands to take on their goliaths.”

And in describing who they are, they say: “at the core of who we are is a challenger spirit. one that is capable of overcoming any goliath that stands in our way. whether it's personal, professional or societal.”

And on their website, it includes phrases such as: “Brave creates. Brave dares. Brave is a mindset,” and they even went so far as to say, “Brave challenges gender roles.”<sup>3</sup> *[pauseeee]*

Is this truly the meaning and application that we are to take from the story of David & Goliath?

Is the story there to just inspire us to fight our goliaths?

Is it to simply stir us to bravery in whatever realm that we find ourselves in? *[pause]*

The answer is a clear, definitive “No.”

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<sup>1</sup> <https://mrucsoplatform.org/similimi-locals-engaged-in-david-and-goliath-battle/>.

<sup>2</sup> <https://momentummag.com/david-goliath-small-organization-taking-bike-theft/>.

<sup>3</sup> [dng.com](http://dng.com).

You cannot accurately understand and apply the story of David & Goliath by removing it outside of its proper context. *[pause]*

Did you notice something about how the world utilizes the story? They use it, but it's devoid of faith.

Those articles, as well as the "David & Goliath" company basically show that it's their challenger spirit that enables them to overcome their goliaths.

And they focus on their bravery against the odds. *[pause]*

Even sports teams that use it, typically use it, not to trust in a great and powerful God to work, but use it to motivate them to "just give it their all". *[pauseeeee]*

I've told you these things to start out this morning because I want you to remove all of that incorrect understanding of this story from your mind.

I want us all to just come to this story, not with the mindset of, "I know this already," but with a mindset of, "Lord, show me. What is this story about?" *[pauseeeee]*

So enough introductory comments, let's see it for ourselves. *[pause]*

*The first section is verses 1-11, which shows us point #1...*

### **I. Death looming. (1-11)**

LET'S READ THESE VERSES.

Just last chapter, David was anointed as king by Samuel, and now an unclear amount of time has passed, and Israel is gathered to go to battle against the Philistines.

Both armies are there, on their respective sides, and out comes Goliath. *[pause]*

We are told a lot of details about him, for the details prove how utterly terrifying he is.

I'll convert the measurements and weights into what we know to help us understand what he was like....

He's about 9 feet, 9 inches tall.

To get some perspective, if he were standing underneath a basketball hoop, his head would only be 3 inches below the rim.

This guy was huge! *[pause]*

His height is enough to scare you, but there's more: he's decked out with the best combat gear of the time, as he's covered in metal from head to toe.

He has a bronze helmet and bronze armor on his legs, he has a coat of mail, and a bronze javelin.

That's not all, he even has a shield bearer who stands in front of him to protect him from any attack. *[pause]*

To emphasize how big this guy was, we are told that his coat of mail weighed about 125 pounds, and the head of his spear alone weighed 15 pounds! *[pauseeee]*

To the Israelites, Goliath must have seemed invincible.

Here was this huge, massive guy mostly protected with metal, and seemingly impossible to defeat.

And it's this warrior who challenges Israel to send a man to fight him. *[pause]*

This one-on-one fight would determine which nation serves the other.

Even that word, "champion," used of Goliath really means, "a man in between."

It was someone who fought as the representative of the army in one-on-one combat. *[pauseeee]*

After seeing Goliath and hearing his challenge, Saul and Israel "were dismayed and greatly afraid."

They saw Goliath and all they thought about was the looming death to come and ensuing slavery.

They thought, "What chance do any of us have against this guy? We are doomed." And the result was fear and dismay. *[pauseeee]*

There are many things in our lives that cause us to fear and be dismayed.

There are many things that make us think, "What chance do I have against that?" *[pause]*

We see the evil of this world, and fear those who oppose us and who oppose God, and who seem so unbeatable.

We see death all around, and fear the uncertainty and fragility of life in a chaotic world.

We can often feel helpless because so many things are unnerving and death is looming. *[pause]*

And when you connect this situation with ours, you realize that the greatest fear-inducing enemies of sinners are: sin, death, and Satan.

Those are truly the Goliath's challenging people of all time. *[pause]*

Our sin says, "You can't measure up to God's standard, just look at you. You can't resist me for longer than a day."

And because of this, people deep down know they are going to be condemned for their sin against a holy God. *[pause]*

And then death says to us, “Ha, you think you can avoid me? I’m around every corner and I consume everyone.”

As Hebrews 2 talks about, through fear of death, people are subject to lifelong slavery.<sup>4</sup> *[pause]*

Sin and death are intimidating, fierce enemies, and then you add Satan into the mix, for he says...

“You think you are a match for me? Just look at the destruction I have caused throughout history.” *[pauseeee]*

These enemies can be frightful and cause great dismay because they seem so unbeatable.

They just seem impossible to defeat in ourselves because *they are* impossible to defeat in ourselves. *[pause]*

So then where’s our hope for victory, when we are like Israel, facing these enemies, so apparently unbeatable and fierce?

Where’s our hope against sin, whose strength is like that of Goliath’s, and in our weakness, we can’t seem to win the battle?

Where’s our hope against death, whose armor is like that of Goliath’s, impenetrable and impassable.

Where’s our hope against Satan, whose weapons and words are like that of Goliath’s, ready to mock us and strike us with great force? *[pauseeee]*

Is there somebody who is going to step forward who will be the “man in between” to fight for us against these enemies?

And just like Israel, our hope comes in the form of a person (an unlikely person), who steps forward.

*And that’s what we find in the next section, in verses 12-47....*

## **II. An unlikely person steps forward. (12-47)**

There’s this fun and informative children’s book about church history called the *Reformation ABC’s*.

And in it, there’s this interesting story about the town of Geneva, which was the town famous because John Calvin lived there.

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<sup>4</sup> See Hebrews 2:15.

In the book, it says this, “One night a battalion of French soldiers tried to climb the city walls and capture the city. But a lady, up late making soup, heard the soldiers.

**She poured her soup over some of them. Their armor clanked and rattled as they fell to the ground.**

The noise woke everybody...[and] the next morning everyone went to church to express gratitude to God for having protected Geneva.”<sup>5</sup> *[pauseee]*

**That story shows an unlikely person helping to win a battle with an unlikely weapon: soup!**

And in a similar, but much greater way, our story this morning shows an unlikely person stepping forward and winning a battle. *[pauseee]*

After describing the intimidating force and challenge of Goliath, the story all of a sudden takes a turn and says in verse 12, “Now David...” *[pause]*

So we have moved away from Goliath and the battlefield to David and the sheep field in Bethlehem. *[pause]*

**We are told that Jesse’s three oldest sons had gone to battle with Saul, but David had gone back and forth from Saul to his home, where he would feed his father’s sheep.**

So Jesse sends David with some food for his brothers at camp, and to see how they are doing. *[pause]*

**David arrives at the battlefield, just as the armies are lining up against each other.**

He runs to the soldiers, and that’s when Goliath comes out, as he did day-after-day, saying the same thing that he has everyday for 40 days.

But here’s one of the major turning points in the story at the end of verse 23, “And David heard him.” *[pause]*

Oh, what a difference this makes! What a change in the story!

**The anointed king has heard the threat of the one who defies the armies of the living God, and the trajectory of the story will now drastically change. *[pauseeee]***

LET’S READ VERSES 24-27 NEXT. *[pauseee]*

**All the men can think about is how scary Goliath is and run away, but all David can think about is how Goliath has defied God’s army.**

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<sup>5</sup> Nichols, Stephen J., and Ned Bustard. *Reformation ABCs: The People, Places, and Things of the Reformation; from A to Z*. Crossway, 2017.

How could they let this Philistine bring such reproach on the armies of the one and only living God?

David is saying, “Who is this guy that he should do that? Who does he think he is?!”

And the soldiers are probably thinking, “Who is this guy?! This guy is the most fearsome warrior we have ever seen!” *[pauseeee]*

That’s when Eliab, David’s oldest brother, overhears David.

And Eliab is angry, most likely he is still jealous about David being anointed king, and he confronts David.

He’s like, “Why are you even here? Don’t you belong with those few sheep out in the middle of nowhere? You’re just looking to see some action from the battle, aren’t you?”

And David says, “What have I done now? Was it not but a word?” And he ignores his brother, and keeps asking questions about the situation. *[pauseeee]*

You see, those zealous for God’s mission will face opposition, but the question is: will it deter us from what God has called us to do?

Will we care more about what they think or more about what God wants? *[pause]*

Even Christ faced intense opposition from the religious leaders, who were jealous of him, but like David, he ignored it, and continued on with his mission. *[pauseeee]*

So word gets around so that Saul hears about David’s interest in Goliath, and David tells Saul that he will fight him. *[pause]*

Can you imagine this scene?

Here’s this young shepherd boy, saying, “I’ll do it! Don’t let anyone worry, for I’ll fight Goliath.”

While everyone, including Saul, is petrified, little David confidently comes in and says that he’s up to the challenge.

And Saul is like, “You can’t fight him, you’re young, but Goliath has been a man of war since his youth.” *[pause]*

That’s when David explains that he’s not just some little kid off the street, for he has experience fighting lions and bears in the fields, protecting his sheep.

And I love verse 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.’” *[pauseeeee]*

For some reason, Saul becomes OK with the plan to send David.

This must have been from the Lord, and Saul must have been desperate, for any person in their own thinking would have been like...

...“There’s no way I’m risking the future of the kingdom on the shoulders of a young shepherd boy.” *[pause]*

And what’s interesting is that Saul should have probably been the one to step forward and fight Goliath.

He was the leader, he was the tallest, and he was the one who was supposed to go out before Israel and fight their battles.<sup>6</sup>

But instead of him, it’s David going to fight, showing that David is truly the rightful king of Israel. *[pauseeee]*

So Saul tries to clothe David with his armor, but this doesn’t work because he wasn’t used to the armor, and that would only hinder his ability to win, not help him.

That’s when he takes a staff, a sling, and 5 stones, and goes out to meet the Philistine giant. *[pauseeeeeee]*

You know, usually before boxers go and fight their match, there’s a lot of talk beforehand, and this competition has no lack of talking, either.

Goliath comes out and sees this young, little boy and he disdains him.

And that’s when he starts to “trash-talk” David.

LET’S READ VERSES 43-47. *[pause]*

Goliath makes fun of David by making fun of how he comes with a staff, and he says that he’s going to feed his flesh to the animals.

But though he was mocked, this didn’t cause David to fret and give up, but he persevered in the battle. *[pause]*

Why, though?

What made David ignore the disdain of his brother, ignore the mocking of Goliath, and ignore the size of the challenge in front of him?

The answer is found in what David says to Goliath, for what he says shows where his trust lies.

David’s trust is NOT in himself, his bravery, or his skill.

This was not some boyish overconfidence, but this was confidence *in the Lord*. *[pauseeeeeee]*

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<sup>6</sup> See 1 Samuel 8:19-20. (This is Israel’s wish in demanding a king.)

Let me tell you, the phrases, “You are enough,” and “just believe in yourself,” are lies straight from the Devil and they will lead you to only fear and dismay. *[pause]*

It was looking to himself that led Saul to tremble on the sidelines, while Israel was reproached day-after-day for 40 days.

Why? Because he knew in himself, he couldn't beat this enemy!

*And in yourself, you will NOT have victory over your sin, death, or Satan. [pause]*

There is no amount of mustering enough strength that will cause you to have victory over sin, just look at your track record.

*No amount of anything in yourself will help you gain eternal life when the standard is perfection.*

And you know what, Satan is too powerful for you, if you trust yourself. *[pause]*

The difference between Saul and David was that Saul looked inward and said, “I can't beat this guy,” and he cowered in fear....

...But David looked upward to God, and said, “I know my God can do anything.” *[pause]*

*Goliath came to him with sword and spear, but David came with something infinitely more powerful, for he came, “in the name of the Lord of hosts.” [pauseeee]*

You see, this was not a battle between only Goliath and a little shepherd boy.

*This was actually a battle between Goliath and God, and in David's mind, that's a complete mismatch.*

And that's why David is so cool, calm, and collected, for the battle was the Lord's!

*He completely trusted in the Lord Almighty, whose power is without equal.*

He knew that even a 9 foot, 9 inch warrior covered in bronze was no match against the Lord. *[pauseeeee]*

*May we rest in the power of our God.*

May we understand that our spiritual battles in this life are not just us vs. the enemy, but the enemy vs. the Lord. *[pauseeeee]*

*If you are going to battle sin, you must believe that the battle is the Lord's.*

If you are going to go up against Satan and his minions, you must believe that the battle is the Lord's.



If you are going to face death someday with assurance, you must believe that the battle is the Lord's. *[pause]*

Facing these things on your own will not cut it.

**Just believing in yourself will fail you every time.**

No amount of self-confidence will be enough, for the enemies are too powerful.

**Your trust must be in the Lord of hosts, who dwarfs even the biggest of giants. *[pauseeee]***

David's trust in God led him not only to trust, but also to be zealous for the glory of God.

A couple times in this story, David brought up the fact that Goliath defied the God of the armies of Israel, and had brought reproach on Israel.

But through David's victory, David said that this would lead to all the earth knowing that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the Lord saves not with sword and spear. *[pauseeee]*

**Here was a man passionate about the glory of God.**

In David's mind, an enemy, no matter how intimidating, was not going to just defy God like that and get away with it.

**But David knew that God would use this battle for His own glory.**

It would cause the world to know that there's a God in Israel, and he's no fake, inactive god.

**He's the real deal, the all-powerful, Lord of Heaven and Earth.**

And He doesn't have to muster up his strength and barely win a victory, for He doesn't even need a sword or spear to do so. *[pauseeee]*

**We face sin's penalty, death's grip, and Satan's arrows, but how do we overcome these fierce enemies?**

We don't; someone else does for us.

**Like the cowering soldiers, we need a "man in between", who fights for us.**

A man who says, "Let no man's heart fail... Your servant will go and fight."

**And an unlikely person has stepped forward.**

A man who didn't seem like a king, but who was zealous for the glory of His Father, not deterred by mockers and revilers, but empowered by His relationship with the Father.

*None other than Jesus Christ, and like David, he has accomplished victory - that's the last section of this story...*

### **III. Victory! (48-58)**

What's interesting in this story is that the build up and preparation for this battle has taken 47 verses, and now the actual fight is covered in a mere 2 verses.

*But nonetheless, the build up and preparation are over, the time for "trash-talking" has passed, and now it's time to actually fight. [pause]*

What's going to happen?

*A young, little David is up against one of the biggest and most intimidating people of that day.*

Just imagine the intensity of this moment, as for Israel, their future hung in the balance, and it rested on the shoulders of a young shepherd boy. *[pause]*

*Israel stood on the sidelines: waiting, wondering, hoping, and praying.*

Would Goliath utterly dominate David? Or would David pull it off?

*All of their hopes were placed in one man, and an unlikely man, at that. [pauseeee]*

LET'S READ VERSES 48-54. *[pause]*

*David and Goliath meet together, David slings a stone at Goliath, the stone sinks into his forehead, and down goes the giant.*

David did this amazing feat with no sword in his hand.

*That detail is given to us because it's reminding us that God doesn't need amazing weapons to defeat the biggest enemy forces.*

*A little shepherd boy defeated the Philistine warrior with a sling and a stone. [pause]*

*This is how God often works, he brings victory through something that seems like it wouldn't bring victory, and he does so to show off his glory and greatness...*

*He's a God who saves not by sword or spear. [pauseeeee]*

*This is similar to how God saves us through Christ.*

Jesus accomplished victory through weakness, in order to show the glory of God.

*What looked like defeat was actually victory, as Jesus went and died on the Cross for our sins. [pauseeeee]*

As I said earlier, our biggest enemies as sinners are sin, death, and Satan.

In yourself, you cannot do enough righteousness to erase your sin, for you just keep sinning.

In yourself, you cannot gain eternal life, for you don't measure up to God's holy, perfect standard.

In yourself, you cannot beat Satan, for he's too strong for you.

Then how? How do we have any hope? = The man who goes in between, for us. *[pause]*

The perfect Son of God, came to this earth, lived a perfect life in our place, died on the Cross for our sins, and rose from the grave.

That's our only hope - the perfect God-man who stepped forward as our representative. *[pause]*

It was through his death and resurrection, that he conquered sin, death, and Satan - our greatest enemies. *[pauseeee]*

By simply trusting in what He has done for you....

... Your sin no longer has dominion over you, and no longer condemns you, for you are forgiven, and when God sees you, He sees Christ's perfect righteousness credited to your account.

Because of his victory, Satan's hold has been broken, for, through His death he destroyed the one who has the power of death, the devil, and delivered all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.<sup>7</sup>

Because He died and rose again, you can look at death straight in the face and say, "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?"<sup>8</sup> *[pauseeee]*

Like David, Jesus was the "man in between" for us, who won the ultimate victory, but it doesn't just stop there, for look at the results of David's victory...

The Philistine army starts running away, and the Israelites, emboldened by this victory, chase after them and then get to enjoy the spoils. *[pauseeee]*

Because of Christ's victory, we get to enjoy the wonderful blessings that He has procured for us.

His victory is the basis of any victory that we have - we are beneficiaries of his triumph.

We can go out into the world confident in the Lord because we look back to what Christ has done for us. *[pauseeee]*

*You see, this story teaches us that...*

**God saves His people for His glory through His anointed King!**

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<sup>7</sup> Hebrews 2:14-15 (paraphrased).

<sup>8</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:55.

The story of David & Goliath is not there to get you to try to muster up the bravery to go and fight a Goliath in your own life.

It's definitely not there for you to just use in a way devoid of faith at all.

It's there to point to your only hope: an anointed King and Deliverer from Bethlehem, who has gone to battle for you.

It's there to remind you that it's His victory which is the basis for any victory over sin in your life, over death, or over Satan.

And he did all this, not with sword or spear, but through his death, so that God would get all the glory. *[pause]*

The battle is the Lord's - it's in the name of the Lord of hosts that we trust.

Will you live in confident faith in the work of Christ, the true champion?

You can live with assured hope, for the victory has been secured, the giant has fallen, and so let's rejoice, charge down the hill, and proclaim triumph!...

...For we can say, "Sin, you don't have dominion over me, and you can't condemn me, for Christ has taken my place and paid my penalty."

"Satan, you have been disarmed, put to open shame, and triumphed over by Christ."<sup>9</sup>

"Death, I don't fear you, for it is not death to die because if I die, yet shall I live."<sup>10</sup>

*This is the victory that we proclaim to the world...*

"There's a champion! You don't need to fear sin, death, and Satan! You don't need to keep trying to do it yourself, for you can't, but there's someone who did it for you!

Trust in the 'man in between,' the champion - Jesus Christ alone." *[pauseeee]*

Dear brother or sister in Christ, truly, "he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world,"<sup>11</sup> and he proved it at Calvary.

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<sup>9</sup> An allusion to Colossians 2:15.

<sup>10</sup> See John 11:25.

<sup>11</sup> 1 John 4:4.