

1 Samuel 17

David and Goliath

Once again, the Philistines were battling the Israelites. The Philistines stood on one side of the mountain and the Israelites on the other with the Valley of Elah running between them.

The Philistines had a champion named Goliath. He stood 9 foot 9 inches tall. He wore a helmet and armor of bronze. He carried a javelin of bronze. And a shield bearer walked before him. Every day he would stand before the ranks of the Philistines and shout across the valley at the ranks of Israel. “Why have you come out dressed for battle? Choose one man from your ranks to battle with me – one man. If he kills me, we will be your servants. But if I prevail and kill him, you will become our servants.” Every day for 40 days Goliath issued this challenge. And every day for 40 days, the Israelites turned away greatly afraid.

The three oldest sons of Jesse of Bethlehem had followed Saul into this battle. One day Jesse said to David, his youngest son, “Take this bread and cheese and grain to the camp for your brothers. Give it to the commander. Then see how your brothers fare and come home to me with good news of them.”

Early the next morning David took the provisions and went as Jesse had commanded him. When he arrived at the camp, he heard shouting and saw the Israelites and Philistines lining up for battle. David gave the provisions to the quarter master and ran to the ranks where he greeted his brothers. As he talked with them, Goliath came forth and again challenged the Israelites to send forth one man to battle.

David saw the great warrior and heard his words, and then he saw the army of Israel turn away in fear. David asked, “Why do you turn away from this Philistine? Who is this man that he should defy the armies of the living God? What will be done for the man who kills him?”

The soldiers said, “Have you seen this man? Saul has promised to enrich the man who kills him. His family will be free from all taxes and Saul will give his daughter’s hand in marriage.”

David’s oldest brother, Eliab, heard him talking with the men. In anger he said, “Why are you here? I know your heart and your conceit; are you here just to watch a battle? Go back to your few sheep; war is for men.”

David answered, “What have I done wrong? I have only asked a question.”

He turned his back to Eliab and again asked the soldiers, “Who does this ungodly Philistine think he is?”

Saul heard David’s question and sent for him. David came before Saul and said, “I am your servant; I will fight this Philistine.”

Saul replied, “No, you cannot fight him. He is a seasoned warrior; you are just a boy.”

But David said, “You don’t understand. I am a shepherd for my father and when a bear or a lion takes a lamb from my flock, I strike down the beast and take the lamb from its mouth. And if a bear or a lion turns against me, I grab its beard, knock it down, and kill it. This Philistine is nothing more than another beast to be killed. The Lord who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine.”

Saul finally agreed to let David fight. He dressed David in his own tunic, coat of armor, and bronze helmet. David fastened the sword over the tunic and tried walking around in Saul’s armor.

He said to Saul, “I cannot fight in these because I am not used to them.” So, he took off the armor, picked up his shepherd’s staff, and went to the stream where he chose five smooth stones to put in his pouch. Dressed like a shepherd, with his sling in hand, David approached Goliath.

Goliath saw David approach; a young boy glowing with health and handsome, and Goliath despised him. He shouted, “What do you think that I am a dog that you send a stick to battle me? Come, I will feed your flesh to the birds and wild animals.”

David replied, “You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will deliver you into my hands, and I’ll strike you down and cut off your head. This very day I will feed the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds and the wild animals, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for this battle is the Lord’s, and he will give all of you into our hands.”

The giant Philistine lumbered toward David, but the shepherd boy raced toward him. Reaching into his pouch, he grabbed a stone, slipped it into his sling and launched it toward the giant. The stone embedded into his forehead and Goliath fell face forward to the ground.

David stood over him, took Goliath's own sword and cut off his head. When the Philistines saw that their fallen hero, they turned and ran toward the gates of Gath. The Israelites surged forward with a great shout. Many Philistines died that day by the swords of Israel.

Saul asked Abner, the commander of the army, "Whose is this young man?" Abner didn't know so he brought David before Saul. David entered the tent, still carrying the bloody head of Goliath.

When Saul asked, "Who are you?"

David replied, "I am David; the son of your servant, Jesse of Bethlehem."