

No Armor Required

What lessons can the story of David and Goliath tell us? Sure - this is a commonly known Bible story. I first learned it when in grade school as my Sunday school teacher put pictures of David and Goliath up on a flannel board (do you remember those). Of course this is a classic underdog story where David, scrawny kid comes to battle a huge mountain of a man and through God's grace and power beats him. It seems like a simple enough story on the surface, but deep within comes real truth. Biblical truth. Let's see what we can uncover.

The story of David and Goliath comes to us from 1 Samuel 17. There is a propensity in society to classify this as a "story" or fairy tale. Something way to farfetched to really have happened. I mean who has ever heard of someone like Goliath in real life. We must remember what Paul tells us though -

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness. - 2 Timothy 3:16

When Paul is discussing the scriptures he does not mean the new testament. It did not exist yet. He means the old testament - the [Talmud](#). From this we believe that the retelling of the confrontation between David and Goliath, along with the rest of the Old testament is a truthful retelling of actual events as God helped the writes to remember and record them.

So as we open our bibles to 1 Samuel 17 we find the Philistine army gathered for battle in Socoh which was about 10 miles west of Gath - a major Philistine city. Across the valley the armies of Saul were gathered. The armies occupied two mountain sides and there was a valley between them.

We read that a champion from the armies of the Philistines named Goliath, who was from Gath (just 10 miles away), came out to challenge the Israelites. He was 9' 9" tall and had bronze armor including a helmet, chain mail weighing 78 pounds and bronze leg armor. He had an enormous javelin slung between his shoulders which had an iron tip weighing 15 pounds. He was accompanied by a shield-bearer. He was an impressive sight. We read how he taunted the armies of Saul beginning in verse 8:

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. 9 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." 10 And the Philistine said, "I defy the ranks of Israel this day. Give me a man, that we may fight together."

The sight of Goliath filled the Israelites with fear as did the words he shouted at them - so

much so that they fled from him and hid. No one dared to accept the challenge.

1. God Uses Those We Least Expect.

The first lesson David and Goliath tells us is that God often chooses to use those we least expect. In the case of David this is quite true.

In verse 17 we are introduced to David the son of Jesse. This may have been his first interaction with Saul, but we actually meet David in the previous chapter where David, the future king of Israel, first meets Samuel. At this point in the narrative God has rejected Saul as king for his disobedience in dealing with Amelek. Samuel is mourning over Saul's failure as king and God's rejection of him.

God, however, is done dealing with Saul and wants to get Samuel up and moving. He has a new man for the job and he needs Samuel to go and anoint him as the next king. He sends Samuel to see Jesse, a man living in Bethlehem who had eight sons.

We start reading in 1 Samuel 16:1:

The LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you grieve over Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and go. I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons." 2 And Samuel said, "How can I go? If Saul hears it, he will kill me." And the LORD said, "Take a heifer with you and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.'" 3 And invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do. And you shall anoint for me him whom I declare to you." 4 Samuel did what the LORD commanded and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling and said, "Do you come peaceably?" 5 And he said, "Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Consecrate yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice." And he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

Notice how the arrival of a prophet of the Lord can bring good tidings or bad tidings. The people were concerned to see Samuel coming toward their town.

When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, "Surely the LORD's anointed is before him." 7 But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart." 8 Then Jesse called Abinadab and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, "Neither has the LORD chosen this one." 9 Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, "Neither has the LORD chosen this one." 10 And Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. And Samuel said to Jesse, "The LORD has not chosen these."



Samuel figured that among the mature, elder sons of Jesse there would be a future king – surely one of these God would choose. Notice how Samuel arrived at this conclusion – he saw that they were tall and pleasing in appearance. God passed on every one of them. Samuel must have been wondering what God had in mind...

Then Samuel said to Jesse, “Are all your sons here?” And he said, “There remains yet the youngest, but behold, he is keeping the sheep.” And Samuel said to Jesse, “Send and get him, for we will not sit down till he comes here.” 12 And he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome. And the LORD said, “Arise, anoint him, for this is he.” 13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers. And the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David from that day forward. And Samuel rose up and went to Ramah.

With so many physically capable sons, each mature and proven we see instead that God chooses the youngest. As we know God chooses based on what is on the inside of the person – not what we see on the outside. We would learn later that God called David “A man after my own heart”. In this case God chose the least expected to rule a nation – and defend a nation as well!

2. The Lord Delivers Those Who Rely On Him

Our second lesson from David and Goliath is that the Lord delivers those who rely on Him. This is a clear message running throughout both the old and new testament. We see it in Moses’ life, clearly in David’s life, we see it in the prophets – think of Johnna, Daniel and

Elijah. Think of Job.

As we return to the battle field we find that Goliath has been coming out and challenging the Israelites every day for 40 days. During this time David has been taking provisions to his brothers and then returning to the field to tend the sheep. This was a common practice for family members - who could not fight due to age or gender - of those on the front lines defending Israel. We find David in verse 23 witnessing the Goliath's challenge for the first time:

As he talked with them [his brothers], behold, the champion, the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name, came up out of the ranks of the Philistines and spoke the same words as before. And David heard him. 24 All the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him and were much afraid. 25 And the men of Israel said, "Have you seen this man who has come up? Surely he has come up to defy Israel. And the king will enrich the man who kills him with great riches and will give him his daughter and make his father's house free in Israel."

Imagine the shock for David. Hearing the giant ridicule, the army of Saul and seeing the men flee for safety, hiding in holes and behind things. David was unaware of the great reward Saul offered to the man who would defeat Goliath. He must have been even more incensed by the situation after learning that no one would dare try to defeat him.

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, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" 27 And the people answered him in the same way, "So shall it be done to the man who kills him."

David's indignation over the words of Goliath, which clearly angered him, was evident. How could the army of the living God allow this gentile to cause such a reproach for Israel? David's words made their way to Saul, and as a result, he sent for him. In the presence of the king, David declared that he would go and fight the giant. Saul was undoubtedly surprised to see this young man, who was likely still a teen, declaring his intention to face Goliath in battle. We pick up the narrative in verse 33:

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." 34 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, 35 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. 36 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."

David had this confidence because he knew who God was and had experienced His divine delivery more than once. He was absolutely certain that God would be there for him again

as he tells Saul in verse 37:

“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.”

3. Be What God Has Called You to Be

(Not What Others Think You Should be)

David won Saul’s approval to fight Goliath but Saul had some ideas of his own as to what the ideal fighter would look like. Our third lesson from the story of David and Goliath is to be what God has called us to be - not what someone else thinks we should be.

Thinking about the battle that was soon to occur in the valley - we realize that there was a lot riding on the outcome. If this young man failed, then all of Israel would become servants of the Philistines. Their victory in a decisive battle would likely have led to the subjugation of the Israelite tribes, imposing tributes, and forced labor, as was common in ancient conquests. Saul wanted to insure success so he encouraged David to wear his own armor and carry his weapons into battle as we read in verses 38 & 39:

Then Saul clothed David with his armor. He put a helmet of bronze on his head and clothed him with a coat of mail, 39 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.

The NIV renders verse 39 this way, making the problem clearer:

David fastened on his sword over the tunic and tried walking around, because he was not used to them. “I cannot go in these,” he said to Saul, “**because I am not used to them.**” So he took them off. (emphasis mine)

King Saul had the best armor and weapons in the entire Hebrew army. He was king after all. David realized, that in spite of the honor of wearing the kings armor and using his sword it was not going to work because he was not used to them. Instead David went into battle wearing just the cloths he wore every day as a shepherd. This allowed him to fight unencumbered as he was accustomed. Wearing the armor would have put him as a significant disadvantage, as he was not used to wearing it.

David found that he had to be who God had made him to be - a shepherd defending his home, not a soldier wearing the kings best armor.

4. Be Prepared When Engaging in God's Work

Our fourth lesson from this story revolves around David's preparations for battle. He was about to fight a giant and deliver the people of Israel through the hand of God. He was certain of this, but he did not enter the fight unprepared. He expected God to deliver Goliath as He had the bear and the lion - miraculous to be sure, but that delivery had to be in line with how God acts. It required some preparation on the part of David. David knew this.



As we remember from the story - David used a sling shot as his weapon of choice. This was a leather pouch on two long leather tethers. It would be swung around at great speed and then one of the tethers would be released allowing the projectile to fly away at high velocity. Immediately after departing from Saul David gathered five smooth stones in preparation for the coming encounter with Goliath. Verse 40 says:

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.

But why five stones?

Some scholars suggest that David was being prepared in case he need to fight one or more of Goliath's four brothers which are mentioned in 2 Samuel 21:15-22. It is possible that he simply need to be prepared in case a battle ensued after he defeated Goliath and he did not want to be defenseless. Regardless the reason we observe that David prepared himself adequately to do what God was calling him to do.

Once prepared he could trust God to do His part.

5. Finish The Work God Has Appointed for You

We know that David kills the giant. This is one of the most famous stories in the old testament. What we may not realize is that he did more than hit Goliath with a stone from a sling shot. In fact, he made sure the giant was dead - finishing the work God had appointed him to do - which is what our final lesson from the story about David and Goliath. The narrative of the battle between these two is found in verses 41 - 49.

And the Philistine moved forward and came near to David, with his shield-bearer in front of him. 42 And when the Philistine looked and saw David, he disdained him, for he was but a youth, ruddy and handsome in appearance. 43 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. 44 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."

David could have fallen back now. I am sure the language Goliath was much stronger than what is accounted in Samuel. David should have been shaking in his sandals. No Israelite had come this far yet. I am sure the giant was disgusted by the scrawny little boy sent out to meet him in battle. This would not be a battle - it would be like flicking a fly off his arm.

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. 46 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, 47 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."

David was not about to be intimidated. He knew something Goliath did not know. The Lord God was fighting for David and His people. You can hear it in David's confidence. I wonder if Goliath had a moment of pause to wonder what was going on.

When the Philistine arose and came and drew near to meet David, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine. 49 And David put his hand in his bag and took out a

stone and slung it and struck the Philistine on his forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell on his face to the ground.

Once Goliath had fallen he was most certainly dead. It seems like the whole valley must have just froze at that moment. The Israelites were likely stunned to see this near child kill the giant and the Philistines paused in unbelief the sight of the mortal wound inflicted on their champion. We read that David had no sword, but he desired to finish the job. In verse 50 we read:

So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and struck the Philistine and killed him. There was no sword in the hand of David. 51 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. When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled. 52 And the men of Israel and Judah rose with a shout and pursued the Philistines.

So the Philistines were routed that day and the men of Israel pursued them cutting them down as they fled. It was possible because one young man believed that God could use him and he refused to back down when God called him to a job.

Conclusion

A familiar story, but some lessons to be learned that might not have been obvious at first blush. Lets recap these five important lessons the story about David and Goliath reveals about God and those he uses:

- **God Uses Those We Least Expect**
 - Sometimes that person might be us
 - Sometimes we might be called to assist that person
 - We need to be open to the call of God
- **The Lord Delivers Those Who Rely On Him**
 - We need to be in communion with Him to be relying on Him
 - Sometimes that delivery might not look the way we envision it
 - We need to be open to the will of God and be sure we are not dictating our will to Him
- **Be What God Has Called You to Be**
 - God has called all of us who claim His blood to a role in ministry
 - Sometimes that role might not be glamorous but we should do our best as that is the work He has called us to
- **Be Prepared When Engaging in God's Work**
 - God will supply our needs as He promises
 - That does not exempt us from preparing appropriately
- **Finish The Work God Has Appointed for You**

- We should not leave our work partially completed