

David and Goliath

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Date: 13 February 2022

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[0 : 00] Well, we read that long passage from 1 Samuel because we are working on Sunday nights through the narrative of David through the life of David.

That's the story of David and Goliath, as you know. David and Goliath is easily the most known and loved story from the Bible in popular culture.

Malcolm Gladwell is one very famous American author who wrote a book about David and Goliath. It's called David and Goliath, The Art of Battling the Giants.

And in it, Malcolm Gladwell, he writes about how David and Goliath is the exemplary story of what it means for an underdog to face the giants in their life, to face your ultimate fears.

And he talks about in the book, he has chapters on the advantages of being an underdog. Now, let me say, there are absolutely wisdom principles from this story, David and Goliath, that teach us something about courage in the face of our fears and the struggles we have in our daily life.

[1 : 09] But that is not what David and Goliath is about. And Gladwell really missed it when he wrote the book. David and Goliath is about something very different from that.

And the key to understanding the David and Goliath story is reading the Bible as one book and knowing that God is the primary author of every word of the whole Bible.

And so to really get what's going on in David and Goliath, you've got to read it in the light of Genesis and Revelation and every single book in between. And so we've got to do that. Now, the second key here, and the reason I wanted to read the whole chapter, even though it's 60 verses, is because this is actually one of the longest battle accounts in the entire Bible, in the Old Testament especially.

And it is the longest battle account in the whole of the books of Samuel. And there is nowhere equivalent that you have to have this much discourse about a battle where the characters are actually speaking about the battle that's coming.

There's nowhere like it really in the whole Bible. It's very unique. And that tells us that the details here are really important, that you can't get the whole of the message without paying attention, asking why is it that this battle account gets so many verses when almost every other battle account in the Old Testament gets so few.

[2 : 34] And so we've got to think about that as well. And so we're going to see that these details, the story of David and Goliath in the light of the whole Bible through looking at three things. Let's look tonight at the giant, the champion, and the fight.

Okay, so first the giant. The giant is Goliath, right? Goliath is a giant of a man. And he comes from a place called Gath and he is the great warrior of the Philistines, we're told.

And the Philistines in this era are the primary enemy of Israel and they're going to war with each other constantly throughout the books of Samuel. And here it is again, they're at war.

And there's some important details. Remember the details are key, there's some really important details about Goliath. Let me point out a few of them to you to start to form a picture of what's going on here.

First, in verse 16 we're told that Goliath comes out every morning and evening to taunt the people of Israel, the army of Israel.

[3 : 36] And that's important. The commentators say that the reason for that is because it's during the sacrifices. That when Israel goes to battle in their army and camps, they would practice the sacrificial law that God had given them in Genesis to Deuteronomy.

And that that would happen every morning and every evening. And so we're told, we're given a clue that Goliath is coming out and he's taunting Israel every morning and evening because he's taunting them right at the time of the sacrifice.

And that means that he's not just taunting Israel and saying you're weak and you're cowardly in the face of me. He's actually there to mock God. The point, he's coming out at the time of the sacrifice because he's taunting the God of Israel.

It's religious. It's more than just about who's the strongest and bravest. Goliath is doing this because he's fighting for his God, Dagon, against Israel's God, the Lord, the Lord of the Bible. Now the second thing is this, the second detail to pay attention to. Goliath is a descendant of the Anakim and maybe if you've read through the Old Testament at all, you might remember that the Anakim are the giant men, the warriors that were living in the Promised Land when Israel was first commanded to go and take the Promised Land.

[4 : 57] And we're told in Joshua 11-22 that when Israel defeated and conquered the Promised Land and took it over that there were a few of the Anakim remaining and they moved to Gath.

And we're told here that Goliath is from Gath, meaning Goliath is one of the few. He's one of the few of the Anakim the men of old left that were the giants, the great warrior men from the Promised Land.

And now, do you see? Now the Anakim, the giant is back in the Promised Land, in the land of God, facing Israel once more and just like the first time, Israel is cowering in fear before the people, the giant that's living in the Promised Land.

Now that makes sense then of the third detail I want to give you. And that's in verse 16 also. It says that he comes out morning and evening to taunt Israel how long for 40 days.

And why 40 days? And that's because Goliath knows the history. Goliath is coming out and mocking the fact that this has already happened.

[6 : 08] That the first time Israel went and we're told take the army across the river and go to the Promised Land. But the Anakim were there and when the spies came back they said these men are too big for us, we cannot do this.

And what happened to Israel? They had to wander in the wilderness for 40 years. And so Goliath comes, the man, the descendant of the people that Israel feared so much and he taunts them for 40 straight days saying this is just like the last time.

You were afraid the first time Israel and we showed that your Lord was not the true Lord and I'm here to do it again. I'm here to do the same thing. See Israel is back in the wilderness all over again facing the same exact problem and the fear of a man is greater to them than the fear of the Lord. It's the same problem they've already faced. Now, there's an even bigger picture going on here than just that Israel is reliving what they've already been through.

And that is in just a few more details. It's not just about the wilderness story being relived here through Goliath. There's something else going on. Just a few more details to take a step back from them to see the big picture.

[7 : 26] And this is it first, three more details first. In verse four, he's called the champion. Goliath is called the champion. Now that is a very loose translation.

Literally what the text says in Hebrew is he is the man between the two. That's what the word champion says in Hebrew. The man between the two.

And the reason for that is because a champion in the ancient Near East is a man who steps out between the two, between the two armies and what was called at the time the Valley of Death. So two armies would encamp. And instead of going toe to toe and so many people being slaughtered, they would each send out a representative champion named the man who would stand between the two in the Valley of Death.

And whoever would win the battle would representing his army would win the whole of the war and vice versa. And so that means Goliath, the man who stands between the two here, he's a substitute.

[8 : 33] He's a representative. He is substituting for his people. And he stands in the place of his people in the Valley of Death.

And the second thing, now remember, this is God's word and God has a lot going on in the details here because he's the author of the whole of Redemptive History.

Who is Goliath really representing? And it's not just the Philistines. And we're told in verse five when it gets into that long stretch about Goliath's, the details of Goliath's armor, which are all very, very significant and how heavy they are.

And one main thing that tells us is that he was wearing literally scales. So the word for armor there in verse five in some texts translated as scaly armor, but it literally just says he was wearing scales. The word for a serpent, the scales of a serpent. And you see what's saying that this representative standing in the Valley of Death coming to take down the people of God he's serpent like.

[9 : 42] He's wearing scales all throughout his body. Who is it that Goliath represents? And this is what Gladwell really misses in the book.

The point God is saying to the reader that Genesis three is actually the paradigm for the David and Goliath encounter. And we're seeing again once more all over again something that's happened long ago in the Garden of God where the people of God were confronted by a scaly serpent. And Goliath is the representative of that serpent just like the serpent brought sin and death and destruction into the world. So now the serpent stands again before God's people. And he's here to bring sin and death and destruction. There are little serpents all throughout the Old Testament. One that comes before Goliath is Pharaoh and one that will come after Goliath is Nebuchadnezzar.

But here is Goliath the serpent standing in front of the people of God. And Genesis three is paradigmatic for all understanding the whole Bible. And so it makes sense that in the greatest text, the greatest verse of Genesis three, verse 15, we read that death did enter the world by the work of this serpent.

[10 : 56] But one day the son of a woman would crush the head of the serpent. And that brings us to detail number three here. It's not surprising at all that the son of a woman in this passage, you know, if you've read this story before, if you were paying attention when we were reading it earlier, how does the son of the woman in this passage defeat this scaly giant?

And he'll take a stone and he'll sling it right into the giant's forehead and he'll cut his head off by a head wound. And so it's not surprising at all. It's actually expected that the son of a woman would crush the head of this scaly serpent, this giant serpent that we see here.

Now the point is that this passage is not about having courage when you're an underdog, although that's a good thing and that's something that we can talk about as a wisdom principle on a different day.

But that's not really what the passage is about. It's actually about what fearful humans really need and what fearful human beings really need in the face of Goliath, in the face of death, representative evil, the serpent himself, the problem of sin and death from the very beginning of human history that we all stand against, what we really need is we really need a champion who would stand in our place.

And what David, the David and Goliath story is really saying is that people are weak. Now we live today in 2022 in the safest and most secure era of human history that's ever been.

[12 : 38] We live longer, we live healthier lives today, we have food and water aplenty. We live in the greatest era for safety, for pushing back the danger that there's ever been and yet at the same time we all know that nevertheless anxieties and fears abound in our lives and they come forth and confront us all the time.

And John Calvin actually, even though he doesn't live in 2022, said something really sharp about this. Listen to Calvin on this. He says, we undertake all things in our lives as if we were establishing immortality for ourselves on earth.

If we see a dead body, we may philosophize briefly about the fleeting nature of life, but the moment we turn away from that body, from the sight of it, the thought of it, the thought of our own perpetuity remains fixed in our minds.

In other words, what he's saying is here is death, the things that we're ultimately helpless against are really an abstraction for us most of the time until the moments in our lives that probably all of us have experienced at some point where we really see Goliath in front of us.

And we're confronted with our mortality and our limited natures and our finitude and ultimately the problems that we cannot do anything about. You can face your fears, but you can't stop death.

[14 : 06] And you can't stop the destructive force of sin across the globe. And you see what the story of David and Goliath is really about. Who are we in this story?

We're not David. And that's what books like Gladwell's misses. We're not David. We're Israel. We're Adam and Eve.

We're standing in the midst of the land that God's made and we're cowering in fear because we are helpless in front of the great problems of this life. And that's death and sin.

And that means that Christianity, the Bible, says the only way to face your problems really is to be weak. Is to be weak.

It says Christianity is on offer tonight for weak people. We need something we cannot provide for ourselves. Now that leads us secondly then to the champion, the giant, now the champion.

[15:05] There's another champion here and that's of course David. David is also called the man who stands between the two here in this passage. And there are important details about David, three encounters that David has that open up the text for us a little bit about what's going on with David.

Three people that David has a big time encounter with. The first one is his brother, Eliab. And this part of the story is not often told when he told the popular story of David and Goliath, but David has a really important encounter with his eldest brother, Eliab.

Now remember last week we saw when Hunter taught from the previous chapter that God had rejected Saul, the king of Israel. And Samuel had gone as a prophet to choose a new king by God's initiative.

And he went to the house of Jesse and instead of picking Eliab, the oldest or the next six of Jesse's sons, he picked God picks the youngest David and he's small and he's unexpected, but he's chosen to be the king.

But now when you flip the chapter, this is probably several years later and David is less than 20 years old because you have to be 20 to go to battle for Israel.

[16:28] So David can't go to battle. We find David instead living in Bethlehem and working as a shepherd and taking food back and forth between the battle line in Bethlehem.

And he's been called by God the king, yet he's still very lowly. He's a shepherd and he can't even fight in Israel's army.

And there's two really clear parallels when you read the commentators about this. One is this, Jesse's instructions to David when he tells David, I want you to take cheese and all this food and go to the battle line and distribute it, is almost a quotation of Genesis 37, 12 to 17.

And in Genesis 37, 12 to 17, that is when Jacob, Israel himself, tells Joseph, one of his sons, to take a bunch of food and go out to feed it to his brothers who are out working, just like David's doing here.

And if you remember the story of Joseph, how, what his brothers did, he goes to his brothers, he takes food to his brothers and what do his brothers do? They reject him and they hate him.

[17:45] Why? Because Joseph has been chosen to be greater than his brothers, to be the ruler of the land in his dream. And once again, we've got David, almost quoting from Genesis 37 here, going to his brothers and how does Eliab respond when David steps up and says, we've got to do something.

We cannot let Goliath taunt the army of the living God. What happens? Eliab hates David for it and rejects David and tells him that he's evil and the rest of David's brothers reject David here.

And even David turns to the other men of Israel and it says they do the same thing, they reject David. And so David, David understand, David is hated in the midst of the army by everyone for standing up in the midst of their fear and saying, we've got to do something about this.

They hate him that he's been chosen, his brothers as king above them and they hate him now because he's come to be the champion of Israel.

But there's also a second thing and that's just like, just like, remember Joshua, you know, the Israelite story, they're in the wilderness and the spies go forth and they come back and they say the Anakim are there, we can't do this, we can't take the promised land, but Joshua comes back and he says, no, we can.

[19:08] And what happened? They rejected him. They cast him away. They said, don't listen to him. And David is the same. There have been so many like it, so many little sons of Adam who have stood up in the Old Testament stories and have been rejected for standing in for the people of God.

And you see what's happening here. If we're to look for a champion, help that we cannot provide for ourselves, then here's the instruction.

Look for one who comes from Bethlehem and will be despised and rejected by his brothers. Now there's a second encounter here and that's David and Saul.

And in verse 38, Saul attempts to clothe David and Saul's, the armor of the king. And a couple interesting things happening here.

One, Saul wants David to dress for war just like a king would dress for war and just like Goliath is dressed for war. You see, Saul believes that the only hope is to be dressed as well as Goliath if there's any chance.

[20 : 21] You know, you say, David, if you want to have a chance at this, you've got to put the armor on that's at least equivalent to Goliath's armor. And you've got to take a sword and you've got to dress yourself like a man.

You've got to go out and you've got to face Goliath and at least the same equipment that Goliath is going to have. You've got to have every advantage. You know, you've got to face your fears and be high tech while you're doing it.

And what happens is David rejects it and he goes low tech and he goes in dressed like nothing but a lowly shepherd. And you see, on the one hand, that is because the true champion, if we're to look for a champion that we need, the true champion is going to be dressed in humility, more like a shepherd than like a king to our eyes.

But at the same time, when Saul, and the commentators talk about this a lot, when Saul puts his armor on David, Saul without knowing it has committed the act of investiture.

What's investiture? It's when the king coronates the next king by taking off his royal dress and putting it on the one, his son, who is to be the next king.

[21 : 37] And you see, what Saul has done is he's crowned the king and he doesn't know it. And at the same time, David has said, but I must go forward as a lowly shepherd.

And that means, secondly, if you're to look for a champion, then look for one who is both a servant and a king simultaneously.

One who looks both like a shepherd but rules in power like a king. That's what we're being told here in this encounter. But there's a third and final encounter here with David, David encounters Goliath.

And I want to actually say something more about what David says about it before he goes out to Goliath. In verse 34 to 36, David gives his justification for going out and fighting.

And this is what he says. He says, I can do this because I've killed bears and lions. And when he says that, what's happening is that David sees Goliath like an animal, like a beast.

[22 : 41] And he said, I've taken down bears, I've taken down lions. There's probably a Wizard of Oz reference in that somewhere, an illustration, but I didn't think of it till now.

He says, I can take Goliath too because he's like a beast and I've tamed the beast. You see what he's saying? He's saying, number one, evil makes us beast like because what sin and evil does is it takes the image of God and tarnishes it.

And it makes us more beastly than human. And that's Goliath, but at the same time, what's really going on here is David is saying, I have already taken dominion over the beast of the earth.

And I can step into this garden, this valley, and take dominion over the serpent as well. And that means that David is a second Adam.

And he's here to step back into the garden of God and take dominion like Adam never did and to take dominion particularly over the serpent beast that came to tempt him.

[23 : 51] And that means if we're to look for a champion, a champion that we really need, we're to look for one who is called the second Adam, who could open the way to the garden of God.

Now, if you're looking for a champion tonight to help you, because yes, you can face your fears in life, but we know at the end of the road that there's nothing we can do about death.

And there's nothing we can do to ultimately get ourselves out from the judgment that we deserve because of our sin. If you're looking for a champion, then look for one first who came from Bethlehem and was despised and rejected by his brothers.

And Matthew 2.6 is the fulfillment of a prophecy from the Old Testament. And it says this, And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, you are not least among the rulers of Judah.

For you, for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd the people of Israel. And that's talking about Jesus Christ. And then it says in Luke 22, the Son of man will suffer and he will be rejected by the people of Israel.

[25 : 03] And he was. And if you're looking for a champion tonight, look, we're told, for one who is both a shepherd, a servant, dressed in humility, and at the same time a king.

And in Mark 10.45, we're told that this Jesus Christ, the Son of man, did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many, that Jesus Christ is the servant king of creation. And lastly, if you're looking for a champion, then you've got to look for a second Adam. And in 1 Corinthians 15.45, we're told that the first man Adam, he became a living being, but the second Adam, Jesus Christ became the life giving spirit.

David and Goliath, this story tells us that in order to face death with any courage, humanity needs a champion. And that champion is Jesus Christ.

And there's no other under heaven by which we can be saved. Now I want to close tonight by just saying, well, what does that have to do with us even more in 2022? Just very briefly.

[26 : 15] There are three things, two things that David says and then one more sentence to close about what this really means for us tonight. And thirdly, the fight. And this is what David says about what he's doing, what he's up to as a champion in verse 26.

He says first, in verse 26, I've come to take away the reproach of Israel. Now the only hope that we have, that any human being here tonight and in the entire world has against sin and against Satan and against death is the substitutionary work of a champion on our behalf.

And David, he says, he says, I've come to take away the reproach of Israel as the champion of Israel. And he's talking there about his heroism.

You see, David's heroism is not at all like Achilles or Odysseus or Goliath for that matter. You know, he's small and he's weak and he can't hold up Saul's armor.

And yet he saves powerfully as the substitutionary representative of the people. And how does he do it? He doesn't do it by example.

[27 : 25] He doesn't set an example. And he doesn't do it by giving a great speech and leading the charge. He doesn't lead the people from the battle and he doesn't.

He doesn't do any of that. He does it by imputation. He says, I've come to take away the reproach of Israel and I'm going to do it by imputation. Imputation, that's how he does it.

What is imputation? Imputation is where whatever is true of the champion becomes true of those he represents.

That's imputation. And the greater David, Jesus Christ, he takes away our reproach in the fact that in his death and resurrection whatever is true of him becomes true of the people he represents.

Now that is an invitation tonight. If you come to Jesus Christ by faith tonight, know that by imputation he has taken away your reproach.

[28 : 28] And let me just tell you three sentences that that means for you this evening. Three sentences. And that's this. That means that he has taken away your guilt.

You before God are judged innocent forever. He has taken away your guilt. That means he's taken, secondly, he's taken away your shame. That every single thing that you've ever done in the past has been forgotten by the living God.

Every sin, every wrongdoing has been cast from God's thoughts as far as the east is from the west because of him, because of this champion. And that means he's taken away your reproach.

You can forgive yourself because the cross was enough for God to forgive you. He's taken away your guilt. He's taken away your shame. He's taken away finally your judgment.

You will not be judged in eternal death because of your champion, Jesus Christ. And that's what it means to have a champion take away your reproach.

[29 : 31] That's the good news of the gospel. And it's an invitation. That the second thing David says here, second of three, and we'll be finished verse 32. Therefore, let no man's heart fail because of the giant Goliath.

Do not let your heart fail then because of this giant, because of this serpent, because of sin and the world and the flesh and the devil and Satan and all that we face that were helpless before.

Don't let your heart fail is what David says he came to give. All in the army of Israel, their hearts failed very quickly here, just like Israel in the wilderness when they faced the giants the first time.

They had no courage. They were paralyzed by the fear of death. And we've said this already. All of us are afraid of different things. We're afraid of physical death. We're afraid of losing our reputation and our successes.

We're afraid of disapproval. We're afraid of being humiliated. We're afraid of not having specific relationships or losing the relationships we do have.

[30 : 36] But note here just that Saul and Goliath's method of dealing with fear in their lives was this, be confident, put your armor on, get out there, pull up your bootstraps, face your fears.

There are advantages to being an underdog. That was Saul's method of facing your fears. Like Christianity comes in this passage and says to you, don't lose heart tonight.

Don't lose heart tonight in the face of the world, the flesh and the devil, but not because you're strong. But because in the midst of your weakness, God did not leave you to die.

But because you have got a champion who has gone before you. Don't lose heart, not because of your strength, but because in your weakness, he's come for you. He's a champion, and he's come to get you and he's come to save you.

Because in Jesus Christ, every single danger and fear that you face is relativized. You have in you if you believe tonight the hope of the martyrs, and that's, you can kill me today, but I cannot die forever.

[31 : 42] And that means in Jesus Christ, there's a way to not lose heart in the midst of our fears. Now thirdly and finally, and the last word. Verse 52, the people respond and it says, the men of Israel and Judah rose with a shout and they chased the Philistines.

Now the message of this story is this, you cannot face Goliath without a champion on your behalf. You cannot face death, sin, the world, the flesh, the devil.

We need a champion. And at the same time, once he won, the Israelite army joined in. They fought too. And that means, as one commentator puts it, he puts it like this, God alone can crush the head of the serpent and he decides to use us to participate.

And you see this, let me just give you two verses from Romans one and Romans 16, the first chapter and the last chapter. And Romans one, we're told that the son of God, Jesus, was a descendant of David according to the flesh and he is declared to be the son of God in power because of the resurrection.

Only the son of God, the son of David in power by resurrection could crush the head of the serpent. And then Romans 16, the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet too.

[33 : 08] And so he says that he's also using you, Christian, to do it as well, to participate in this task, Jason Hood, one commentator says this, by God's grace, we are simultaneously recipients of God's great victory and participant in the battle of the ages between God and the serpent.

And he calls us to join the fight. And in Luke 10, 72 of his disciples come to Jesus and Jesus says, I send you out with authority over the power of the enemy.

Go and fight. And we do that when we resist the world, the flesh and the devil, when we fight back our indwelling sin, when we push back temptation, when we do good works, when we spread the good news of Christ across the world enough in many other ways, you participate in the fight of the champion.

He's done it all. And then if you rest in him, he invites you to the battle. And so we'll give Ephesians 6, verse 10, the final word, which is an invitation.

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might put on the full armor of God so that you too will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.

[34 : 31] Let's pray together. Father, we give thanks that you preach the gospel to us into the saints of the Old Testament, even from times of old, from a place like 1 Samuel 17.

We give thanks for the great witness of David to us that we need a champion who is greater than ourselves. And so Father, I pray tonight that you would all give us hearts as we prep to enter Monday that are actually weak before they're strong so that they could be strong.

So we rest tonight in our champion, Jesus. And I pray for anybody here who's wrestling with that message, Lord, that you would meet with them and speak with them, that they would know how much they need a champion and the power of the true champion of Christ himself, and that you would send us forth with the armor of Christ, that we would resist the schemes of the devil, we're told about in Ephesians 6, and fight with you and for you to push back the work of the serpent. And we ask this in Jesus' name.