

## The Prosperity Gospel of David and Goliath, Part 1 (1 Samuel 17:1-30)

### 1. Context (v.1-3)

- Saul's failure to defeat the Philistines as they fled Michmash (chapters 13-14) westward has given them ample time to reorganize.
- It may have been several years that elapsed between chapters 14-17.
- The Philistines have mustered their soldiers now at Socoh and Azekah. Unlike previous battles, which occurred in Benjamin, their offensive is in Judah. They assemble their army at a coastal plain that is about 12 miles west of Bethlehem.
- This was a strategic area to control because it enabled access to the good farming land of the coastal plain and grazing areas of the valley.
- Not only has Saul forfeited his future kingdom (13:14) and his current kingship (15:23, 26), but the Spirit of God has departed from him (16:14). Saul is now a washed-out king with no divine empowerment who is facing a formidable enemy.

### 2. Champion from Gath (v.4-7)

- Height (v.4): He is 9 foot, 9 inches.
  - Gigantic men have been mentioned in Scripture; the sons of Anak, who were descendants of the Nephilim were reported by the Israelites spies as being "of great height" and eventually driven out of the land to the western coastal city of Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod (Numb. 13:22; 13:28-29, 32-33; Joshua 15:14; Judg. 1:20) who were descendants of the Nephilim.
- Armor (v.5): His coat of mail weighed 126 pounds. Additionally, he covered his legs with bronze armor and his head with a bronze helmet.
- Weapons (v.6-7): He had two weapons and a shield; a scimitar, a spear (Aegean javelin), and a square shield which would have been between 5-6 feet in length. The javelin had a loop and a cord to facilitate long distance throws. However, the head of the spear weighed 15 pounds. This spear would have been too heavy to throw long distances and as a result, was most likely an intimidation tactic.

\*It appears as though Goliath is impregnable; he is covered from head to toe in armor.

### 3. Challenge (v.8-10)

- Goliath would come out twice per day (v.16) challenging any "man."
- This one-on-one fighting was not well-known in the region and may have been a Hittite manner of war. Israel was unfamiliar with this because Goliath had to explain the rules of engagement.
- The Philistines, along with other pagan nations, believed that when nations would fight, their gods would fight. This was not just for large armies; it was true for fighting among men at an individual level.
- Dagon's statue, one of the Philistine gods, has already bowed in homage before the LORD, represented by the ark (5:3). Not only that, but the statue's head was already decapitated, along with the severing off of both arms.
- Even though this may be a manner of fighting that is unfamiliar with the nation of Israel, they may have similar army sizes; even if there was a victory, it would be a pyrrhic victory. The casualties would be extensive.

- Goliath's opening statement is directed at the soldiers, not at Saul. His question teases them, and ridicules Saul; they are servants of Saul. He does not even call Saul "king." His speech is giving them the option of serving someone else. Not only is everyone fearful (v.11), but Goliath adds insult to injury.

### 4. Cowards (v.11, 24)

- The whole point of Goliath's description is to demonstrate how the nation "sees" him and how they melt when they "hear" him.
- The audience has already been prepped not to look on the outward appearances (16:7). This is what Saul and the people do, and they are terrified.
- The irony, which accentuates Saul's cowardice, is how similar he is to Goliath:
  - The people requested a king, like the other nations, to "lead them in battle" (8:20). Saul was raised up to defeat the Philistines (9:16). Saul is also one of two men who have a sword and armor (13:19-22). Externally, Saul would be best suited to fight Goliath.
- No one wants to fight Goliath; not even Abner or Jonathan.

### 5. Chain of Events (v.12-27)

- David's introduction (v.12): He enters the scene thematically, not chronologically since we have already implicitly been introduced to him. His pedigree is submitted in contrast to Goliath; David is a nobody from somewhere.
- David's service to Saul (v.15): David has been in Saul's service (16:21) but has been permitted to intermittently help his father on the farm. At least forty days have passed since he played his lyre for Saul, for this is the first time he hears of Goliath.
- David's mission (v.17-19): Jesse sends David to the front lines with grain for his three sons and cheese for the officers. David is younger than twenty years old (Numb. 1:3; 20) which is why he is not serving in Saul's army (1 Sam. 14:52)
- David's future rewards (v.24-27, 30): As David arrives at the Valley of Elah, he hears the war cry; both armies are lining up. He leaves the food with the "keeper of the baggage" and finds his three brothers. He hears of the rewards that Saul has promised to the one who defeats Goliath and investigates the legitimacy of those promises: royalty through marriage to his daughter, along with tax exemptions.

### 6. Commitment (v.28-29)

- Eliab, David's oldest brother, portrays David as abandoning his "few sheep" by meddling in the affairs of soldiers. Eliab accuses David of having "evil in his heart" and "presumption" which are used to describe human disobedience to God (Deut. 17:12; 18:20-22).
- David is also rebuked for wanting to "see." The reader now understands why Eliab was not selected as king (1 Sam.16:6-7); he is the evil one who ironically, cannot "see." He is a coward, who despite witnessing David's anointing, still "sees" with carnal eyes. David's presence and inquiry sickens Eliab because he has the courage and faith that Eliab lacks.