

The Lord Will Deliver You into My Hand  
1 Samuel 17  
May 7, 2023  
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CenterPoint Church

## Introduction

Last week a Philippine patrol boat was sailing in the South China Sea when a Chinese Coast Guard vessel twice its size steered right into its path, forcing the smaller boat to kill its engine and hit reverse to avoid a collision.<sup>1</sup> In the same week, the Miami Heat, who barely made it into the NBA playoffs, won their first round series against the Milwaukee Bucks, who had the best record in the regular season.<sup>2</sup> Also last week, Australian fashion designer Katie Perry was given a favorable verdict in court at the end of a trial where she sued the American singer, Katy Perry, over copyright infringement.<sup>3</sup> What's the common thread between these stories, besides all of them being in last week's news? They each had the same literary reference in their headlines: "Chinese, Philippine Vessels in 'David and Goliath' Near-Crash," "When David Beats Goliath in the Playoffs," and "David v. Goliath Court Battle." It's been 3,000 years since a young shepherd boy took on a giant soldier in battle, yet it's still the go-to description for any time that a "little guy" or group takes on a bigger, stronger opponent in war, sports, politics, court, or business.

Even people who know nothing else about the Bible understand what it means to be a David facing a Goliath. But very few people have read the original account, understand its place in Israel's redemptive history, and know the true moral of the story. Perhaps you grew up going to Sunday School, so you think you know the details; we'll find out as we work our way through the text. My last sermon was the first one in our series on the life of King David, where we saw him get anointed by the prophet Samuel and then get invited to the palace to play music when King Saul was distressed. This chapter gets David out on the battlefield where he faced a threat to his nation that had everyone else trembling with fear, but David knew exactly how to deal with dangerous threats. I've split up the chapter into four points, each one with a title from a Psalm. The first one is

### **I. Verses 1-11: In the Valley of the Shadow of Death (Psalm 23)**

*<sup>1</sup> Now the Philistines gathered their armies for battle. And they were gathered at Socoh, which belongs to Judah, and encamped between Socoh and Azekah, in Ephes-dammim. <sup>2</sup> And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered, and encamped in the Valley of Elah, and drew up in line of battle against the Philistines. <sup>3</sup> And the Philistines stood on the mountain on the one side, and Israel stood on the mountain on the other side, with a valley between them. <sup>4</sup> And there came out from the camp of the Philistines a champion named Goliath of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span. <sup>5</sup> He had a helmet of bronze on his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail, and the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of bronze. <sup>6</sup> And he had bronze armor on his legs, and a javelin of bronze slung between his shoulders. <sup>7</sup> The shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron. And his shield-bearer went before him. <sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> 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." <sup>10</sup> And the Philistine said, "I defy the ranks of Israel this day. Give me a man,*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.barrons.com/news/chinese-philippine-vessels-in-david-and-goliath-near-crash-dc5d67f0>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.msn.com/en-ae/sports/nba/when-david-beats-goliath-in-the-playoffs/ar-AA1araii>

<sup>3</sup> [https://metro.co.uk/2023/04/28/katy-perry-loses-david-v-goliath-court-battle-against-katie-perry-18693294/?ico=trending-post-strip\\_item\\_3](https://metro.co.uk/2023/04/28/katy-perry-loses-david-v-goliath-court-battle-against-katie-perry-18693294/?ico=trending-post-strip_item_3)

*that we may fight together.”<sup>11</sup> When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid.*

Jonathan, Saul’s son, had defeated the Philistines back in chapter 14. It was an embarrassing defeat where the Lord threw the Philistine soldiers into confusion and disarray. So they were back for the next round, gathering their army on one side of the Valley of Elah, which was about a mile across, staring across at Saul’s army on the other side. This time it seemed that the Philistines had the upper hand because they had a secret weapon, a champion named Goliath. The first thing that we hear about him is his height: six cubits and a span, which is roughly equal to nine and a half feet. The Latin version of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, has a different height - four cubits and a span - which would be 6’9”. That’s still pretty big for the time, but that’s smaller than Shaquille O’Neil and most NBA centers and power forwards. Many scholars are uncomfortable with Goliath’s height being 9 ½ ft. tall; some people say that the writer of 1 Samuel was exaggerating, while others say that he was approximating. The tallest man in the *Guinness Book of World Records* was one inch short of nine feet, so that’s only seven inches shorter. I think there’s good reason to believe Goliath was 9 ½ feet tall: the text says that he was from Gath. Which, though it seems like an unnecessary detail, actually refers to Joshua 11, which lists Gath as one of the cities where the Anakim live; they were the descendants of the giants. So when the twelve spies scouted out the Promised Land, ten of the spies were too intimidated by the giants in the land, by Goliath’s ancestors.<sup>4</sup>

Regardless of his height, Goliath was also intimidating because he was covered in armor basically from head to toe. When we convert the cubits and shekels, we find out that his coat of armor weighed 125 pounds! That’s like giving a middle schooler a long piggyback ride. The head of his spear weighed 15 pounds; just the tip! He had a shield that was so heavy that it required its own shield-bearer, someone to carry it until he was ready to use it. What did we just hear about judging by appearances in the last chapter? *“Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature.”* But the Israelites couldn’t help it, they were *“dismayed and greatly afraid.”*

Goliath’s words were as intimidating as his height and weapons. In verse 10 he said that he defied the ranks of Israel; a better way to understand that is scorning or mocking them. His offer to fight someone one-on-one was a way for both armies to avoid massive bloodshed; which, I guess, was very thoughtful of him. Just send your champion out, and he and I will fight to the death; whoever wins, wins for their whole nation. We’ll find out that his deal was a lie at the end; the Philistines had no intention of becoming slaves of the Israelites regardless of the outcome of the fight. But they assumed that no one could beat Goliath, so why even worry about the fine print of the deal?

For Israel, who would have been the obvious choice to fight Goliath? How about the tallest man with the best armor? Maybe the king who was chosen because he was a head taller than his countrymen? But Saul’s courage was lacking, as were all of his soldiers. Maybe a hero would arise from somewhere else, someone who was most unlikely to fight the giant; in the same way that he was the most unlikely to be anointed future king in the last chapter. Next point:

## **II. Verses 12-30: The Nations Rage and Plot in Vain (Psalm 2)**

<sup>12</sup> Now David was the son of an Ephrathite of Bethlehem in Judah, named Jesse, who had eight sons. In the days of Saul the man was already old and advanced in years. <sup>13</sup> The three oldest sons of Jesse had followed Saul to the battle. And the names of his three sons who went to the battle were Eliab the firstborn, and next to him Abinadab, and the third Shammah. <sup>14</sup> David was the youngest. The three eldest followed Saul, <sup>15</sup> but David went back and forth from Saul to feed his father’s sheep at

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<sup>4</sup> Richard D. Phillips, *1 Samuel* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2012), p. 281.

*Bethlehem. <sup>16</sup> For forty days the Philistine came forward and took his stand, morning and evening. <sup>17</sup> And Jesse said to David his son, "Take for your brothers an ephah of this parched grain, and these ten loaves, and carry them quickly to the camp to your brothers. <sup>18</sup> Also take these ten cheeses to the commander of their thousand. See if your brothers are well, and bring some token from them." <sup>19</sup> Now Saul and they and all the men of Israel were in the Valley of Elah, fighting with the Philistines. <sup>20</sup> And David rose early in the morning and left the sheep with a keeper and took the provisions and went, as Jesse had commanded him. And he came to the encampment as the host was going out to the battle line, shouting the war cry. <sup>21</sup> And Israel and the Philistines drew up for battle, army against army. <sup>22</sup> And David left the things in charge of the keeper of the baggage and ran to the ranks and went and greeted his brothers. <sup>23</sup> As he talked with them, 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. <sup>24</sup> All the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him and were much afraid. <sup>25</sup> 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." <sup>26</sup> 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?" <sup>27</sup> And the people answered him in the same way, "So shall it be done to the man who kills him." <sup>28</sup> Now Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spoke to the men. And Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, "Why have you come down? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your presumption and the evil of your heart, for you have come down to see the battle." <sup>29</sup> And David said, "What have I done now? Was it not but a word?" <sup>30</sup> And he turned away from him toward another, and spoke in the same way, and the people answered him again as before.*

For forty days, Goliath had been coming out twice a day to issue his challenge. And Saul had a standing offer for anyone who accepted the challenge and won: a heap of riches, marriage to one of his daughters, and his family would never have to pay taxes. Still no takers. But up came the DoorDash guy; David was bringing bread and cheese to his brothers. He wasn't there to join the battle, he didn't even meet the minimum age requirement for military service, he was just there to check on his brothers for their dad. But he heard things that he could not let go unchallenged. David was shocked at what the enemy was saying. He had never heard anyone speak so defiantly against the Lord. He found it hard to believe that no one had stepped forward to defend the honor of Yahweh God. David's first words in the Bible are questions about who the enemy is and what it's going to take to kill him. Everyone else was intimidated by Goliath's size, his weapons, and his trash talking. But David was just offended and angry on God's behalf. As Dale Davis said, "Israel thought the Philistine invulnerable; for David he was only uncircumcised."<sup>5</sup>

David's oldest brother, Eliab, rebuked him, accusing him of abandoning the sheep and having an evil, prideful heart. Maybe Eliab was still angry about being passed over for being the next king. Or maybe he was just being like most older brothers who underestimate and criticize their younger brothers, especially the baby of the family. Does David argue with him? No, he turned away and found someone else to ask about Goliath. Sometimes, you have to know who the real enemy is and stop fighting people who are on your side. Sometimes the most discouraging voices for us are our families who think they know us best and can't imagine us accomplishing great things – a prophet has no honor in his hometown, right? For Christians, sometimes our brothers and sisters in Christ underestimate and discourage us. Sometimes we need to do what David did, and just ignore them and press on with our mission.

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<sup>5</sup> Dale Ralph Davis, *1 & 2 Samuel* (England: Christian Focus, 2000), p. 149.

Back to the text, where David gained a royal audience for the second time:

### **III. Verses 31-39: He Trains My Hands for War (Psalm 144)**

<sup>31</sup> When the words that David spoke were heard, they repeated them before Saul, and he sent for him.

<sup>32</sup> And David said to Saul, "Let no man's heart fail because of him. Your servant will go and fight with this Philistine." <sup>33</sup> And 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." <sup>34</sup> 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, <sup>35</sup> 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. <sup>36</sup> 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." <sup>37</sup> 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." And Saul said to David, "Go, and the Lord be with you!" <sup>38</sup> Then Saul clothed David with his armor. He put a helmet of bronze on his head and clothed him with a coat of mail, <sup>39</sup> 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.

Young, small, unarmed David decided that he would fight the giant. Remember that he had already been anointed the future king, so he might have been thinking, "I should start acting kingly, and killing this man in battle would definitely establish me as worthy of the throne." But there's no indication that was his motivation. And it wasn't because he was promised riches and the king's daughter, because he would probably be getting money and a royal wife when he became king anyways. It was purely to defend God's honor and shut up His enemies.

Saul sent for David because everyone in the army had been hearing David's big talk. Saul's first assessment was that he didn't have a chance against a seasoned combat veteran. But David said, "Hey, I've faced difficult opponents before, lions and bears trying to eat my sheep. This guy is no different, I can take him too. The Lord was with me then, He'll be with me now." Then Saul assumed that for David to have any chance, he would need the armor and weapons that Goliath had. So he had the boy try on his armor, which of course didn't fit and David didn't need anyway - he wasn't planning on hand-to-hand combat with Goliath. It's really interesting, though, that Saul tried to give David his armor. The fact that David has already been anointed to become the next king, to take Saul's place, makes this little scene full of dramatic irony - that Saul was unknowingly clothing the next king with his own wardrobe.<sup>6</sup>

Here's some application for us: sometimes we're tempted to minister in the ways that work for other people. People have consistently tried to mold me throughout my ministry career (and sometimes it was good advice). But I was told that the best path in the PCA to being a hotshot pastor is to not mess around with youth ministry but go do RUF campus ministry, then plant a church; then the big churches will come calling. I didn't really listen to any of that, I loved my 15 years in youth ministry and learning as an Associate for 20+ years; I didn't feel called to college ministry or planting. Similarly, I've been urged to get a doctorate in theology because my dad did and my last pastor did, and that's what serious pastors do. But I don't want to get a doctorate and I don't know what value it would add to my ministry, other than looking like an impressive title. I'm not against more education, I'm just not feeling called to that, I don't want someone else's armor.

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<sup>6</sup> John Woodhouse, *1 Samuel: Looking for a Leader* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), p. 332.

Maybe you've been told that you need to try on someone else's armor, to look and act like someone that you're not. You're a planner and an organizer, but you've been told that you need to be an upfront person and do "real people" ministry. I hope that you politely decline that and find ways that you are naturally gifted to minister. Or you're the person who can't stay organized to save his life, who is a total mess and can't keep track of receipts or keep up with the calendar, but the Bible comes alive when you teach it, and you're most effective meeting with people one-on-one. I'm not saying that you shouldn't ever challenge yourself or get outside your comfort zone, but look for the armor that fits you. Let's use the gifting and equipping that God has given to each individual and harness that for effective ministry.

Back to the text: David was the replacement for both Saul and his brothers, the most courageous man in Israel, because he knew where his strength and deliverance would come from

#### **IV. Verses 40-58: You Have Saved Us From Our Foes (Psalm 44)**

*40 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. 41 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." 45 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." 48 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. 50 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 as far as Gath and the gates of Ekron, so that the wounded Philistines fell on the way from Shaaraim as far as Gath and Ekron. 53 And the people of Israel came back from chasing the Philistines, and they plundered their camp. 54 And David took the head of the Philistine and brought it to Jerusalem, but he put his armor in his tent. 55 As soon as Saul saw David go out against the Philistine, he said to Abner, the commander of the army, "Abner, whose son is this youth?" And Abner said, "As your soul lives, O king, I do not know." 56 And the king said, "Inquire whose son the boy is." 57 And as soon as David returned from the striking down of the Philistine, Abner took him, and brought him before Saul with the head of the Philistine in his hand. 58 And Saul said to him, "Whose son are you, young man?" And David answered, "I am the son of your servant Jesse the Bethlehemite."*

If you thought Eliab and Saul were insulting telling David that he had bad motives and too little experience, Goliath had nothing but disdain and scorn for him. He cursed him, called him puny, and told him that he would feed him to the birds. But David was ready with a great comeback threat of his own, giving him a bit of a theological lecture: "You have defied the true God, Yahweh, the God of

Israel, so He is going to deliver you into my hands. I'll strike you down without a sword or a spear, and then I'll cut off your head. And then everyone behind you is going to die too."

So they both rushed forward, but it wasn't much of a fight. Before Goliath could pull his sword out of its sheath, David made a quick whipping motion with his slingshot and Goliath never knew what hit him as he fell face forward. It's been estimated that a stone from a slingshot can travel well over 100 miles per hour. I've thought about that when I've been playing golf and been a little ahead of someone else who is hitting their shot – if this hits me in the forehead, I'm dead.

I never thought about this until I read a sermon by Steven Nicoletti: What was the punishment for blasphemy in Leviticus 24:16? Death by stoning. What was Goliath's punishment for blaspheming God? David stoned him.<sup>7</sup> Then the boy cut off the giant's head with his own sword, the signal to both armies that the battle was over. The rest of the chapter sees the Israelite army find their courage and charge the Philistines, who fled in fear. At that point, it was just a question of how far the Philistines would get before the Israelites caught up and killed them, and how the plunder from the enemy's camp would be divided.

### **Conclusion**

As we wrap this up, I've given a few small points of application along the way, but what is the best way to understand the main message of this passage?

- A) Never underestimate the little guy.
- B) Never be intimidated by someone bigger than you.
- C) Whatever giants you face in your life, you need to summon the courage to take them down.
- D) God will help you face and defeat the obstacles in your life.
- E) We have a great champion who won the ultimate victory for all of His people.

You may have guessed that those choices got better and better as we went. God can help you defeat the obstacles and giants in your life, but if that is our best understanding of this passage, then it becomes a very man-centered, rah-rah, "God helps those who help themselves" passage. You see, one of the problems in understanding what this passage says to us is that we as Christians identify with the wrong person in this text. We think that we're David; we think the moral of the story is to step out in faith against the enemy in God's confidence and strength and He'll empower us. But we're not David in this story. We're the rest of the Israelite army who were too scared to go into battle. We have a terrifying enemy named Satan, who is the head of God's enemies, bringing every demonic force, and death and hell with him. And we have no chance against him. So who is David? Who was the representative warrior for God's people who fought our biggest spiritual enemy and defeated him on our behalf? Jesus is the greater David who battled our enemy for us. And when He won, we all won.

Like David, Jesus walked bravely to the battlefield despite the appearance that there was no way that He could win this battle. To fight the evil one, you have to use his weapons to wage war against him. But Jesus chose the most unlikely path to victory: dying. Goliath taunted and sneered at David, just as those who saw Jesus on the cross mocked and jeered at Him. But before Satan knew it, he was defeated by a weapon that he never saw coming. Hebrews 2:14-15: He (Jesus) "*likewise partook of the same things, that through death He might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.*"

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<sup>7</sup> Rev. Steven Nicoletti's sermon "Two Kings, A Giant, and the Story of the Universe," from 6/16/19, found at [faithtacoma.org](http://faithtacoma.org).

Did you catch that? If He hadn't won, we would have been subjected to lifelong slavery, just like the Israelites would have been. So what about us? Are we even part of the battle? Yes, after David won the battle, Saul's army rushed forward to defeat the rest of the enemy, having already been handed victory. In the same way, we have been handed the victory, and that gives us the courage to chase after the rest of our enemies and slay them. Are you saying we should kill non-Christians? Absolutely not! We love them because they're captives of our true enemy. We battle to set them free and see them saved as well. The battle we engage in now is called spiritual warfare:

Ephesians 6:12 - *"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places."*

2 Corinthians 10:4-5 - *"For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ."*

We now have the strength to put our sin to death. We live to honor God with our hearts, souls, minds, and strength, and we spread His word, challenging the false conceptions about Him in the world. We are strengthened for ultimate victory because Christ won our salvation through His death.

➔ Transition to Communion

Benediction - Psalm 121:7-8 - *"The Lord will keep you from all evil; He will keep your life. The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore."*