

# A Man's Man

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David is one of my favorite persons in the Bible. He loved God and was called “a man after God’s own heart.” He lived passionately and was a mighty warrior. When we first meet David he is probably a teenager. While his brothers are off fighting wars, David stays home and takes care of the sheep. The prophet Samuel anoints David as the next king of Israel. The current king, Saul, is still on the throne when David is anointed king. David will not assume the throne until Saul is dead.

One day David is sent by his father to check on his brothers who are engaged in battle with the Philistines. When David arrives he observes that the armies of Israel are camped on a hill on one side of the Valley of Death. The Philistines are camped out on hill on the other side of the Valley. The Philistines have a mighty warrior named Goliath who every day for 40 days has challenged one of the Israelites to come out and fight him. Rather than both armies engaging in battle in which many lives would be lost, two men will fight—one from each side as representatives of their armies. The entire nation would surrender to the army of the winning representative. Goliath was a giant of a man and all the Israelites are afraid to fight him. If defeated then all of their countrymen would become slaves. No one wanted to assume the blame for defeat.

Every day Goliath came into the valley and shouted at the Israelite army to send someone to fight him. No Israelite would accept the challenge. Along comes the little shepherd boy, David, who believes that the battle is God’s - not Israel’s. He goes into the valley to meet Goliath armed only with a sling shot. Let’s see what happens:

## 1 Samuel 17:41-50

<sup>41</sup> Meanwhile, the Philistine, with his shield bearer in front of him, kept coming closer to David.

<sup>42</sup> He looked David over and saw that he was only a boy, ruddy and handsome, and he despised him.

<sup>43</sup> He said to David, "Am I a dog, that you come at me with sticks?" And the Philistine cursed David by his gods.

<sup>44</sup> "Come here," he said, "and I'll give your flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field!"

<sup>45</sup> David said to the Philistine, "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.

<sup>46</sup> This day the LORD will hand you over to me, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head. Today I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel.

<sup>47</sup> All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD's, and he will give all of you into our hands."

<sup>48</sup> As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him.

<sup>49</sup> Reaching into his bag and taking out a stone, he slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell facedown on the ground.

<sup>50</sup> So David triumphed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone; without a sword in his hand he struck down the Philistine and killed him.

Samuel took oil and anointed David king of Israel “and from that day on the Spirit of the Lord came upon David in power.” (1 Samuel 16:13) Throughout the Bible, the Holy Spirit is associated with power, boldness and courage. The Holy Spirit is often called the “Spirit of the Lord” in the Old Testament. The Spirit of the Lord came upon a judge named Othniel and made him bold. He led the Israelites in a victory over the Syrian Army. (Judges 3:10) The Spirit of the Lord also came upon Gideon (Judges 6:34) and gave him boldness to take 300 men and defeat a Midianite army that was so vast they could not be counted. The Spirit of the Lord came upon Samson and gave him strength to rip apart a lion. (Judges 14:6) In the New Testament we find that the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles when they were told to keep silent and no longer preach about Jesus. The Spirit gave them courage to preach the word with boldness.

We live in a world that is filled with anxiety and fear. We desperately need courage. I want us to look at the three key men in this passage and see what we learn about the source of real courage.

The first person I want us to look at is Saul. The Spirit of the Lord had left Saul because he defied God’s instructions for a battle against the Amalekites. When Saul went into battle against the Philistines, the Spirit of the Lord was no longer upon him. Therefore, when the giant Goliath came out and bellowed his challenge for one warrior to fight him as a representative of the people, “Saul and all the Israelites were dismayed and terrified.” (1 Samuel 17:11) Saul was a mighty warrior and should have responded to the challenge. David arrives on the scene and hears the threats of Goliath. He says, “Let no one lose heart.” This phrase is battle terminology for let no one fall away or fall back. The key to winning a

battle is to stand your ground and not fall back. To stand in the face of an advancing army that appears stronger requires courage.

Courage means doing the right thing regardless of the outcome. Courage is the first responders rushing into World Trade Center Towers on 9/11 to rescue the persons trapped inside. Courage is seen in our troops in the Middle East both men and women who day after day patrol the streets protecting our freedom. They never know when a man, woman or child will approach them strapped with explosives determined to kill.

Courage also comes in other forms. Courage is admitting to a spouse or child or parent that I'm wrong. Courage is telling the truth when a little white lie would help me to avoid exposure.

Alfred Adler said, "If you really want to know what motivates you in life, look at your greatest nightmare—your greatest fear." One of the strongest motivators in life is to avoid our greatest fear at all costs. What is your greatest fear? Is it death or physical pain or failure or humiliation? Courage is facing up to our greatest fear and doing the right thing regardless of the outcome.

When we give into our fears, it causes all kinds of problems. The fear of failure in our career drives many of us to become workaholics. Rather than choosing to balance our work and our family life, we give into our fear and lose ground. We neglect our families and watch them fall apart. We are powerless to act because of our fear of being seen as a failure at work.

Parents who fear the rejection of their children can never say "no". Their fear produces a spoiled, irresponsible adult. Because of the fear of rejection, they cannot do the right thing for their children. They lose ground. When our fears keep us from doing the right thing, we harm ourselves and others.

Saul's fear of defeat and humiliation prevented him from doing the right thing and fighting Goliath. He could not overcome his fear because the Spirit of the Lord had left him and without God's Spirit he had no courage.

Goliath on the other hand appears to be the epitome of courage. He possesses sheer brute strength. He is over 9 feet tall. He has the latest, high tech fighting gear for his day. His armor weighs 125 pounds. The shaft of his spear is about the size of a telephone pole. The tip weighs 15 pounds. Goliath is called a champion. He is what the world would consider the ultimate fighting machine. With his size and equipment, who could possibly beat him?

Contrast Goliath with David. David is still a boy. Saul tries to put his armor on David, and it swallows him. It is so heavy he can't move. He goes into battle a scrawny little kid with low tech equipment—a sling shot and no armor.

Both men have courage. Goliath's self-esteem causes him to be a warrior with no fear. He banishes any fearful thoughts by looking at himself in a mirror. Who is bigger and tougher than he is? No one can possibly defeat him. He has a perfect fight record. He has never lost. What does he have to fear?

Goliath is a lot like the little old lady who was pulled over for speeding. When the officer approached the window she said, "I need to let you know that I am armed." The officer asked what weapon she had. She responded, "I have a 40 caliber semi-automatic in the glove compartment. I also have a 9 mm in the console. And I have a 357 magnum in the door panel." The officer responded, "What are you afraid of?" The lady said, "Not a dang thing."

Because of his size, strength, his armor and his weapons, Goliath was not afraid of anything or anyone. When we banish our fears based upon our own strength, we are out of touch with reality which makes us vulnerable. Goliath was vulnerable but did not know it. He put on all this massive armor, but his forehead was exposed. That is all that was needed to bring him down. Fear is real. All of us have fear. When we convince ourselves that we are

invulnerable and have nothing to fear, we are out of touch with reality. We set ourselves up to fall. Goliath's courage was counterfeit—not real.

In David we find real courage. David said to Goliath, “You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty... All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves, for the battle is the Lord's.” (I Samuel 17:45, 47) The Spirit of the Lord had left Saul so he was paralyzed by fear and could not do the right thing. Goliath had a counterfeit courage which banished fear, but left him vulnerable. David knew he was weak. He was outmatched. But the Spirit of the Lord came upon him and gave him courage to do the right thing regardless of the consequences. Now David fully trusted in God to grant him victory. But when he walked into the valley he did not know what the outcome would be. He risked facing his fears by trusting in God. David was victorious because he admitted his weakness and knew he had no chance of winning without God.

God's power is made perfect in our weakness. When we are weak, then we are strong. This is the opposite of what the world teaches us. The world sees Goliaths as strong. When we think we are strong without God, then we are the most vulnerable. David proved to be a mighty warrior throughout his life. Before he went into battle he inquired of God if he would grant him victory. He knew he could not win a battle without God even if his army was larger than his enemy.

God is always demonstrating his strength through weakness. When God became a man in Jesus Christ, he came into the world as a tiny baby. What is weaker and more vulnerable than a baby? Jesus chose to be weak and not to fight against those who sought to kill him. He could have called 10,000 angels and wiped out his enemies, but instead he chose weakness. He allowed them to flog him and crucify him.

Goliath and David were representatives of their nations when they entered into the Valley of Death for battle. What happened to either of them determined what would happen to their entire nation. If Goliath won, the Israelites would become slaves to the Philistines. If David won, the Philistines would become slaves to the Israelites. One man represented his entire nation.

When Jesus went to the cross he entered the ultimate Valley of Death to battle with the forces of evil and death. He went as our representative. What happened to him happened to us. We died with him on the cross. Our sins were placed on him and died with him. On Easter Sunday morning when he rose from the grave and conquered death once and for all, we rose with him. He did for us what we could not do for ourselves.

As we battle our fears, we have three choices. Like Saul, we can be paralyzed by our fear and let them control us. Like Goliath, we can depend upon our own counterfeit courage and expose our vulnerabilities. Or like David we can admit our weakness and our fear, and call upon the Spirit of God to fill us with his courage. A man's man is not a Goliath; rather he is a David who knows where real strength comes from to face our fears. He is a man who depends upon God's Spirit to give him courage to do the right thing regardless of the consequences. As you face the realities and fears of life this week, where will you get your courage?