

Last week, I began a new series on the Life of David as recorded in 1 & 2 Samuel. To briefly recap the place in history: after bringing His people into the Promised Land, God raises up judges to lead the people. The last of the judges is Samuel, and as he gets old and his children are not following God, the people of Israel ask him to appoint a king so that they can be like the other nations. Samuel appoints Saul, who is the most physically impressive Israelite, head and shoulders above all the rest. However, although Saul starts out well in battle, he proves to be unable to listen and heed the commands of God, and so God rejects Saul as king. Last week we looked at the anointing of David as the next king by Samuel, and we paid particular attention to the verse **“man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”** We talked about how God sees right through you into your heart, to your deepest fears, motivations, longings, into your character. His primary concern is about shaping your heart. God had Samuel anoint David as the next king because he found in him **a man after his own heart.**

Now, Samuel anoints David as the next king, and God’s spirit leaves Saul and comes on David. However, David does not become king right away, but goes back to tending his father’s sheep, while also becoming a harp player in Saul’s court. It is instructive to note that **just because you get a word from the Lord does not mean that it is supposed to happen now, or that you need to force it to happen.** God does that sometimes – you know that He wants you to do something, or has something in store for you, but it doesn’t necessarily mean right away. There may be some work he needs to do on you first to prepare you for that moment, just as He did with David. **But we also see the importance of being ready, because you never know when the moment of testing might come.**

This week we’re up to one of the most famous stories in the whole Bible, the account of David and Goliath. It’s a story about courage in the face of your fears, and where true, lasting courage comes from. Let’s read it in its entirety:

*1 Samuel 17:1-58 - Now the Philistines gathered their forces for war and assembled at Socoh in Judah. They pitched camp at Ephes Dammim, between Socoh and Azekah. <sup>2</sup> Saul and the Israelites assembled and camped in the Valley of Elah and drew up their battle line to meet the Philistines. <sup>3</sup> The Philistines occupied one hill and the Israelites another, with the valley between them. <sup>4</sup> A **champion** named Goliath, who was from Gath, came out of the Philistine camp. He was over nine feet tall. <sup>5</sup> He had a bronze helmet on his head and wore a coat of scale armor of bronze weighing five thousand shekels; <sup>6</sup> on his legs he wore bronze greaves, and a bronze javelin was slung on his back. <sup>7</sup> His spear shaft was like a weaver's rod, and its iron point weighed six hundred shekels. His shield*

bearer went ahead of him. <sup>8</sup><sup>12</sup> Now David was the son of an Ephrathite named Jesse, who was from Bethlehem Goliath stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, "Why do you come out and line up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not the servants of Saul? Choose a man and have him come down to me. <sup>9</sup> If he is able to fight and kill me, we will become your subjects; but if I overcome him and kill him, you will become our subjects and serve us." <sup>10</sup> Then the Philistine said, "This day I defy the ranks of Israel! Give me a man and let us fight each other." <sup>11</sup> On hearing the Philistine's words, Saul and all the Israelites were dismayed and terrified. in Judah. Jesse had eight sons, and in Saul's time he was old and well advanced in years. <sup>13</sup> Jesse's three oldest sons had followed Saul to the war: The firstborn was Eliab; the second, Abinadab; and the third, Shammah. <sup>14</sup> David was the youngest. The three oldest followed Saul, <sup>15</sup> **but David went back and forth from Saul to tend his father's sheep at Bethlehem.** <sup>16</sup> For forty days the Philistine came forward every morning and evening and took his stand. <sup>17</sup> Now Jesse said to his son David, "Take this ephah of roasted grain and these ten loaves of bread for your brothers and hurry to their camp. <sup>18</sup> Take along these ten cheeses to the commander of their unit. See how your brothers are and bring back some assurance from them. <sup>19</sup> They are with Saul and all the men of Israel in the Valley of Elah, fighting against the Philistines." <sup>20</sup> Early in the morning David left the flock with a shepherd, loaded up and set out, as Jesse had directed. He reached the camp as the army was going out to its battle positions, shouting the war cry. <sup>21</sup> Israel and the Philistines were drawing up their lines facing each other. <sup>22</sup> David left his things with the keeper of supplies, ran to the battle lines and greeted his brothers. <sup>23</sup> As he was talking with them, Goliath, the Philistine champion from Gath, stepped out from his lines and shouted his usual defiance, and David heard it. <sup>24</sup> When the Israelites saw the man, they all ran from him in great fear. <sup>25</sup> Now the Israelites had been saying, "Do you see how this man keeps coming out? He comes out to defy Israel. The king will give great wealth to the man who kills him. He will also give him his daughter in marriage and will exempt his father's family from taxes in Israel." <sup>26</sup> David asked the men standing near him, "What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and removes this disgrace from Israel? Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?" <sup>27</sup> They repeated to him what they had been saying and told him, "This is what will be done for the man who kills him." <sup>28</sup> When Eliab, David's oldest brother, heard him speaking with the men, he burned with anger at him and asked, "Why have you come down here? And with whom did you leave those few sheep in the desert? I know how conceited you are and how wicked your heart is; you came down only to watch the battle." <sup>29</sup> "Now what have I done?" said David. "Can't I even speak?" <sup>30</sup> He then turned away to someone else and brought up the same matter, and the men answered him as before. <sup>31</sup> What David said was overheard

and reported to Saul, and Saul sent for him. <sup>32</sup> David said to Saul, "Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him." <sup>33</sup> Saul replied, "You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a boy, and he has been a fighting man from his youth." <sup>34</sup> But David said to Saul, "Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, <sup>35</sup> I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. <sup>36</sup> Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God. <sup>37</sup> **The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.**" Saul said to David, "Go, and the LORD be with you." <sup>38</sup> Then Saul dressed David in his own tunic. He put a coat of armor on him and a bronze helmet on his head. <sup>39</sup> 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. <sup>40</sup> Then he took his staff in his hand, chose five smooth stones from the stream, put them in the pouch of his shepherd's bag and, with his sling in his hand, approached the Philistine. <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. <sup>51</sup> David ran and stood over him. He took hold of the Philistine's sword and drew it from the scabbard. After he killed him, he cut off his head with the sword. When the Philistines saw that their hero was dead, they turned and ran. <sup>52</sup> Then the men of Israel and Judah surged forward with a shout and pursued the Philistines to the entrance of Gath and to the gates of Ekron. Their dead were

*strewn along the Shaaraim road to Gath and Ekron. <sup>53</sup> When the Israelites returned from chasing the Philistines, they plundered their camp. <sup>54</sup> David took the Philistine's head and brought it to Jerusalem, and he put the Philistine's weapons in his own tent. <sup>55</sup> As Saul watched David going out to meet the Philistine, he said to Abner, commander of the army, "Abner, whose son is that young man?" Abner replied, "As surely as you live, O king, I don't know." <sup>56</sup> The king said, "Find out whose son this young man is." <sup>57</sup> As soon as David returned from killing the Philistine, Abner took him and brought him before Saul, with David still holding the Philistine's head. <sup>58</sup> "Whose son are you, young man?" Saul asked him. David said, "I am the son of your servant Jesse of Bethlehem."*

To recap: the Israelites and Philistines are at war. In v. 4, a champion name Goliath challenges Israel to send out a man to fight. The word “champion” in Hebrew literally means “a man between.” Instead of a bloody battle, one fights against one, and the nation of the loser becomes the slave. Nobody is willing to fight Goliath until young David arrives on the scene. He sees Goliath and his zeal for God’s honor burns, and he volunteers to fight. After rejecting Saul’s armor, he picks up five stones with his sling (stones were 2-3 inches and when thrown by a sling could reach speeds of 100 to 150 mph), and uses them to defeat Goliath. And the Philistines run away.

This is a story about courage in the face of fears, courage in the battle, and how we can become someone who possesses courage in the face of fear. There are three main characters in this story, and each one shows us an approach to handling our fears – Saul, Goliath, and David.

There was certainly a lot more to be afraid of back then – armies, battles, plagues, pestilence, etc. But fear is universal, and unique to each person, and in order to not be dismayed and terrified, it takes courage. Courage – **being able to do the right thing regardless of the danger or the consequences** – is underrated, I believe, but is a big deal in the Bible. Look at Revelation 21:6-8, which are Jesus’ words about who will be in the new heavens and new earth and who will be cast out: *He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. <sup>7</sup> He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son. <sup>8</sup> But **the cowardly**, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars-- their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."*

Notice that the cowardly are at the top of the list! I don't think any of us would be shocked by the others on the list – the unbelieving, the murderers, etc. – but who would have expected the cowardly to be the first on the list? It takes courage to follow Christ, because life is a battle, and life with Christ is even more of a battle. It takes little courage to come here and sit on a Sunday. It takes all the courage in the world to truly follow Christ. **Courage is being able to do the right thing regardless of the danger or the consequences.**

Another great example is from *Daniel 3:16-18*, the account of three men of God who were told in Babylon to bow down to an idol. “*Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, ‘O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. <sup>17</sup> If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. <sup>18</sup> But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.’*”

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are resolved to do the right thing, no matter what happens, whether or not God saves them.

How do we find this courage?

The first person is Saul. Notice his response to Goliath in verse 11:

*<sup>11</sup> On hearing the Philistine's words, Saul and all the Israelites were dismayed and terrified.*

They have all lost heart, lost courage, and among them is their king, Saul. Certainly, as the most physically impressive Israelite, Saul should have been the one to stand up to Goliath, but the king is not being kingly. Instead, he was “dismayed and terrified,” intimidated by Goliath.

What are you afraid of? What are your greatest fears? What are the things that give you anxiety in the pit of your stomach? What keeps you up nights worrying? What are you most protective of? The things we fear the most reveal what it is we value the most, what our heart is most after. Consider some common fears:

**Being taken advantage of or hurt** – we value safety, security, protection  
**Rejection** – we value approval of others, we fear that we are nothing (**intimacy** – we fear being used, taken advantage of, being seen for who we are and rejected,

**being alone/Abandonment** – we fear that nobody loves us – we value love and need to know we are valuable

**Failure/humiliation** – we value success and the approval of others for what we do; we fear we do not matter

**Loss of autonomy (Commitment)** – we value freedom, individuality, and fear being trapped, change & instability

**Pain & Death** – we value safety, security, peace, comfort

These fears all strike at the core of who we are. It takes tremendous courage to not let your fears rule your life. **Courage is the ability to face your heart's greatest nightmare and do the right thing anyways, no matter what.** To not be dismayed and terrified, as Saul was.

Giving in to your greatest fears wreaks havoc in your life, because your decisions are not free, but are made out of fear. For example, if you fear rejection, you will ultimately make decisions based on the approval or disapproval of others, and find ways to hide who you are or what you really think because you are afraid that if someone rejects you then you are not valuable. If you fear being a failure, you may overwork to the point where it negatively affects your spouse and kids.

Saul should have been the one out fighting Goliath, but he was dismayed and terrified, intimidating and ruled by his fears, just like many of us.

So how do we get courage? The text gives us two possibilities.

**The first possibility, and the second character, is Goliath.** In the passage, Goliath is described as the ultimate champion. He is over 9 feet tall (or 6 foot 9 according to the Greek translation, the Septuagint). He has 126 pounds of armor. And he has courage. He has high self-esteem. He is not afraid of anyone, because he looks at himself with confidence.

<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!"*

Goliath gives us an example of the way much of the world tells us to deal with fear. We find the confidence in ourselves in order to overcome the fear. Psychologists talk about external locus of control vs. internal locus of control, and the importance of getting to the point where you are not concerned about what

other people think, but are confident in how you see yourself, that you can look at yourself with confidence. Do whatever it takes – **psyche yourself up, visualize success, practice successful situations, and use whatever cognitive and behavioral strategies you can to overcome your fears.** In other words, be like Goliath, where your self-esteem does not depend on what other people think, but only on your own perception of yourself. That's Goliath. He looked at himself and was courageous.

This approach to fear can work, but in the end it is a short term solution and does not reach to the depth of our fears. I believe that there are two things that are wrong about the Goliath approach.

**First – fear is important.** Goliath was not afraid, but he still lost! Perhaps it would have been better if he was a little afraid. He went in with his shields down. He was out of touch with reality and as a result made himself vulnerable. Fear is realistic; there are bad things that can happen, and fear can be a valuable emotion when we do not let it rule us but inform us. Fear of having no money can motivate us to work. Fear of rejection can cause us to treat others well.

**Secondly – we need something that goes deeper than just self-talk and psyching oneself up.** I mean really, does the Goliath approach, looking at yourself with confidence, really work? If everyone thinks I'm ugly, can I really convince myself that I'm beautiful? If everyone says I'm a failure, can I really convince myself that I'm a success? If I know I'm going to die, can I convince myself not to be afraid? We need an approach that goes deeper, that deals with the fear underneath the fear. Saul was so impressive because of his height. Now they learned the problem with relying on worldly sources of strength. There is always someone stronger, richer, smarter.

Where do you really get this courage? Let's look at David's approach.

When this passage begins, David is still serving, simply following orders to bring food to his brothers. And then he hears Goliath, and goes to fight him. Listen to what he says to Goliath:

*"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."*

All throughout this passage, his eyes are on the Lord. His courage comes not from keeping his eyes on others (Saul) or even from keeping his eyes on himself (Goliath). **His courage comes because his eyes are fixed on God.** All he is concerned about is God's name, God's reputation. Like Shadrach, he will do what is right no matter what happens to him.

David is weak. He is not a great Hercules or Beowulf. He is weak. He is a boy, coming with a slingshot. But it's precisely because he is weak that he wins. He looks like a joke, but God saves the people through his weakness, because David's eyes are on the Lord.

Look at David. Notice how God saves them here. **David fights as a champion – a man between – as a representative of the people.** He doesn't just fight to inspire them – he is fighting as them. He is winning the victory for them. He is not just their example and inspiration but their Savior. Remember how Goliath put it:

*Choose a man and have him come down to me. <sup>9</sup> If he is able to fight and kill me, we will become your subjects; but if I overcome him and kill him, you will become our subjects and serve us."*

David is representing the people of God, fighting as Israel. He is not just their example, but their Savior, and by doing this, he points to the greater Savior, Jesus, who also came in weakness, and was not just our example of courage but our savior, our representative, dying for us so that we could be saved. Jesus is our champion, defeating Satan and freeing us from captivity.

You are not David. You are the Israelite cowering in fear, in need of a Savior. Jesus is the greater David.

The answer to the question of courage comes from the gospel of Jesus Christ.

**Being taken advantage of or hurt** – We see Jesus being taken advantage of and hurt for us, and we see how **God can work all things for good.**

**Rejection** – We see Jesus dying for us and we read in Romans 8 that **Nothing can separate us from the love of God.**

**Failure/humiliation** – There is no condemnation in Christ. Consider this great verse:

*1 Corinthians 4:3-4* **I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself.** <sup>4</sup> *My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me.*

**Loss of autonomy** - **Our hope is fixed in heaven.**

**Pain & Death** – **To live is Christ, to die is gain.**

True courage does not come from looking at yourself, psyching yourself up and convincing yourself that you can do it. It comes from God, from learning what it means to keep your eyes fixed on Him, to be most concerned about His name, His reputation. It comes from knowing who you are in Him.

**True courage comes from knowing who God is and keeping your eyes fixed on him. It comes from being filled with the Holy Spirit of power, love, and self-discipline.**

In Hebrews 11, there is a list of all the great heroes of the Bible. And like many approaches to fear, we are encouraged to look at the great examples of faith. But the conclusion of the writer is not just to look at the examples. Instead, he says “fix your eyes on Jesus”:

*Hebrews 12:1-3* - *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.* <sup>2</sup> *Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.* <sup>3</sup> *Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.*

If you want to overcome fear, it will not ultimately come from inspirational examples or psyching yourself up, but from fixing your eyes on Jesus, who is not only our example but our Savior, who answers the deepest question of our heart –

yes, we are loveable, and yes, we do matter, and yes, in Him, we do have what it takes to make it.

When our eyes are fixed on Jesus, we do not fear rejection or abandonment or humiliation, because our identity is secure in him. We do not fear pain, because he brings meaning through it. We do not fear death, because he has overcome it. We do not fear being taken advantage of, or instability, because we are secure in Him

Fix your eyes on Jesus in the battle, so that He might give you true courage.