

David's Victory Over Goliath

1 Samuel 17:31-58

1 Samuel 17:31-58 - *"Now when the words which David spoke were heard, they reported them to Saul; and he sent for him. ³² Then David said to Saul, 'Let no man's heart fail because of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine.' ³³ And Saul said to David, 'You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for you are a youth, and he a man of war from his youth.' ³⁴ But David said to Saul, 'Your servant used to keep his father's sheep, and when a lion or a bear came and took a lamb out of the flock, ³⁵ I went out after it and struck it, and delivered the lamb from its mouth; and when it arose against me, I caught it by its beard, and struck and killed it. ³⁶ Your servant has killed both lion and bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, seeing he has defied the armies of the living God.' ³⁷ Moreover David said, 'The LORD, who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.'*

And Saul said to David, 'Go, and the LORD be with you!' ³⁸ So Saul clothed David with his armor, and he put a bronze helmet on his head; he also clothed him with a coat of mail. ³⁹ David fastened his sword to his armor and tried to walk, for he had not tested them. And David said to Saul, 'I cannot walk with these, for I have not tested them.' So David took them off. ⁴⁰ Then he took his staff in his hand; and he chose for himself five smooth stones from the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag, in a pouch which he had, and his sling was in his hand. And he drew near to the Philistine. ⁴¹ So the Philistine came, and began drawing near to David, and the man who bore the shield went before him. ⁴² And when the Philistine looked about and saw David, he disdained him; for he was only a youth, ruddy and good-looking. ⁴³ So 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 And the Philistine said to David, 'Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field!' ⁴⁵ Then David said to the Philistine, 'You come to me with a sword, 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 and take your head from you. And this day I will give the carcasses of the camp of the Philistines to the birds of the air and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. ⁴⁷ Then all this assembly shall know that the LORD does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is the LORD's, and He will give you into our hands.' ⁴⁸ So it was, when the Philistine arose and came and drew near to meet David, that David hurried and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine. ⁴⁹ Then David put his hand in his bag and took out a stone; and he slung it and struck the Philistine in his forehead, so that the stone sank into his forehead, and he fell on his face to the earth. ⁵⁰ So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, and struck the Philistine and killed him. But there was no sword in the hand of David. ⁵¹

Therefore David ran and stood over the Philistine, took his sword and drew it out of its sheath and killed him, and cut off his head with it. And when the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled. ⁵² Now the men of Israel and Judah arose and shouted, and pursued the Philistines as far as the entrance of the valley and to the gates of Ekron. And the wounded of the Philistines fell along the road to Shaaraim, even as far as Gath and Ekron. ⁵³ Then the children of

Israel returned from chasing the Philistines, and they plundered their tents. ⁵⁴ And David took the head of the Philistine and brought it to Jerusalem, but he put his armor in his tent. ⁵⁵ When Saul saw David going 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 So the king said, "Inquire whose son this young man is." ⁵⁷ Then, as David returned from the slaughter 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?" So David answered, "I am the son of your servant Jesse the Bethlehemite."

Background Notes

In the last few verses of this chapter, why does it seem that King Saul didn't even know who David was? Didn't we read back in 1 Samuel 16 that David played the harp for King Saul, and that he was King Saul's armor-bearer? Well, one possible answer here is that while Saul certainly knew David as a musician, he was now asking about his lineage. "Whose son are you?" was now an important question, since David was about to become King Saul's son-in-law!

In the first half of this chapter we saw that the battle between David and Goliath illustrates spiritual warfare. Goliath represents satanic forces opposed to God's people. In fact, in the spiritual picture, Goliath can represent Satan himself. David, we mentioned, represents committed and courageous believers who are willing to step out in faith, and fight the Goliaths.

In the final analysis of this spiritual picture, however, David represents our Lord Himself, who conquered Satan. As David's father sent David to the front lines care for the welfare of his brethren (v18), so God the Father sent Jesus Christ to earth for the welfare of God's children Israel. As David was misunderstood, despised, and rejected by his brothers (v28), so Jesus Christ was misunderstood, despised and rejected by his own people, Israel. As David was not recognized as the anointed future king of Israel when he first appeared, so Israel didn't recognize Jesus Christ as their Messiah when he came -- but they will in the future! And as David conquered Goliath, so our Lord Jesus Christ conquered Satan at the cross.

Now notice *how* David conquered Goliath. After felling Goliath with his sling and stone, David cut off Goliath's head with Goliath's own weapon. This is certainly a spiritual picture of what took place at the cross. Until the death of Christ on the cross, Satan had the power of death -- but through death, Satan's own weapon, Jesus Christ conquered death! "...through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil..." (Hebrews 2:14).

Doctrinal Points

1. God is not confined to conventional methods in spiritual warfare.

Verses 33, 38-40: "And Saul said to David, "You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for you are a youth, and he a man of war from his youth" ... So Saul clothed David with his armor, and he put a bronze helmet on his head; he also clothed him with a coat of mail. David fastened his sword to his armor and tried to walk, for he had not

tested them. And David said to Saul, "I cannot walk with these, for I have not tested them." So David took them off. Then he took his staff in his hand; and he chose for himself five smooth stones from the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag, in a pouch which he had, and his sling was in his hand."

When David volunteered to fight Goliath, notice Saul's conventional thinking and conventional methods. In essence, Saul was saying, "You haven't been trained as a warrior as Goliath has, but if you insist on fighting him, here's my armor. You don't go into battle with a sling - you've got to go the conventional way!" But David said, "No, I'm not used to wearing armor. I'll go with my sling only." Using stones and a sling is certainly not the conventional way to fight Philistine giants!

Do you see the lesson in spiritual warfare here? In spiritual warfare, God is not confined to conventional methods! Here's an illustration. When the Lord called me out of secular employment into full time ministry, at first I thought that I should take the conventional path to ministry by going to seminary, being ordained, and becoming the pastor of a church. Well, the Lord used 1 Samuel 17 at that time to show me that God is not confined to conventional methods in spiritual warfare. David didn't go the conventional way - he took what he had, his sling, and then he confronted and fought Goliath. So, in obedience to God's call, I just started in serving the Lord full-time with what I had – my Bible and a good Sunday school background! That was my "slingshot"! I thank the Lord that I was able to go to seminary later, but seminary was not necessary for me to start serving the Lord. God is not confined to conventional methods in spiritual warfare.

Some of you may be thinking about serving the Lord full time in some capacity, perhaps in foreign missions. The conventional way of "fighting" in this important area of spiritual warfare is to study at Bible College, move to a foreign country, learn the language and culture, build relationships with people, start a Bible study, and then plant a church. This is a conventional method, and it's a good method. But God is not confined to conventional methods in spiritual warfare. Here's a suggestion. If you're good with computers (or if you know someone who is), what about creating a website designed specifically for that foreign country? You could have a daily or weekly website Bible study, with back and forth communication. Computer technology is mushrooming in third world countries, and programs for translating English into other languages now exist. Believers can and should use modern technology in spiritual warfare. God is not confined to conventional methods in spiritual warfare.

2. God can use a believer's former experience in spiritual warfare.

Verses 44-46: *"And the Philistine said to David, "Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field!" Then David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword, 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. This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand..."* Here's a paraphrase of what Goliath said: "Fee, fie, foe, fum; I smell the blood of a Hebrew man; be he alive or be he dead, I'll grind his bones to make my bread!" And David said, "I'll rock you to sleep!" Goliath said, "That thought never entered my head!" (Well, that's a very loose paraphrase of the verses that we just read!)

Seriously speaking, in these verses we see how God used David's former experience in his victory over Goliath. Where did David learn to sling a stone with such accuracy? We know, of course, that God guided that stone to just the right chink in Goliath's armor, but this certainly wasn't the first time David picked up a sling! David had probably spent hours practicing, slinging stones when he was out in the fields tending the sheep. And verse 36 says that David had killed a lion and bear while tending the sheep. And shepherding sheep was good training for David's later leadership as king. People are a lot like sheep! God certainly used that training to give David confidence and courage for his fight with Goliath.

David ran toward Goliath, an illustration of staying on the offensive in spiritual warfare. God gave David the victory, but he certainly used David's past experience. As you fight the good fight today, God can use your past experience. He can use your administrative training or business experience, for example, to proficiently organize and run a ministry. God can use your past education as a lawyer or a scientist to effectively defend the faith. God can use a believer's former experience in spiritual warfare.

Practical Application

Don't practice fanciful "interpretation" of Scripture!

Verse 40: *"he chose for himself five smooth stones from the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag.. and his sling was in his hand."* Why did David choose five smooth stones when he needed only one? Answer: this was just common sense. David didn't know that he would need just one stone. He logically and properly figured that he could reload four more times, if need be, in his approach to Goliath.

Did you ever hear that the other four stones were for Goliath's brothers? That's certainly a fanciful interpretation of Scripture -- that is, "interpretation" with unrestrained imagination! It would be valid interpretation if the Scripture told us that these four stones were used to kill Goliath's brothers -- but it doesn't! Don't practice fanciful "interpretation" of Scripture!