

# David and Goliath

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[ 0 : 00 ] It would be worth keeping that open in front of you. It's a gripping story, a great chance there to actually kind of hear it from the horse's mouth, as it were, look at how the Bible presents these events to us.

I'm sure that if you were to ask for 100 people to name a story from the Bible, then David and Goliath would be one of the top answers that we'd hear time and time again. It's a story that is so well known, it's almost become part of common speech, hasn't it?

Whenever there's a real mismatch and someone smaller takes on someone bigger, whether it's in sports or a legal case or almost any kind of underdog story, we're told it is a David versus Goliath situation.

It's become almost a kind of a parable about how the plucky underdog can defeat a more powerful opponent. And yet I think what's often forgotten, what's often ignored, is actually the part that God plays in this story.

This isn't ultimately a story about little David. This is a story about a great God. David himself would certainly not have said that he was the hero. His focus throughout is on God.

[ 1 : 14 ] The battle, the victory is the Lord's. And so we're going to look together then through these verses, through this real event in history, which I say in so many ways we might feel we know so well.

But as far as possible, I'd like us to kind of see it, I suppose, with fresh eyes, focusing on God, finding out why is it here in the Bible? What is it that we learn about God and what he's done?

And what a difference, what a transformation that makes in our lives. And I'd like to do that by considering in turn the three main human characters of Goliath, David, and the Israelite army, and to see what they in turn are showing us about who is ultimately the main character, God himself, who this whole story, this whole Bible is about.

So let's begin and look at these characters together. And we begin, number one, with an undefeatable enemy. The first character that we come across, who we really can't miss in this account, is Goliath, a seemingly invincible opponent.

The picture is of the two armies kind of lined up for battle. There's the Israelites, who are God's people, standing across the valley from the Philistines, who are their enemies. And Goliath emerges from the Philistine camp, a huge guy, a terrifying soldier.

[ 2 : 41 ] I was once waiting at an airport next to the Scottish rugby team. It made me feel like a hobbit. You know, all these enormous people around. And yet Goliath would have made even them look tiny.

Verses four down to seven, if you're not sure on your cubits and your spans, his height is over nine and a half foot tall. He's described as having this kind of full body armor, this huge spear and a sword.

As if that wasn't all enough, he has a shield barrier, carrying even more protection who goes ahead of him. So imagine how terrifying it would be as Goliath steps forward and he delivers this challenge.

Verses eight and nine. Choose a man for yourselves and let him come down to me. If he's able to fight with me and kill me, then we'll be your servants. But if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall be our servants and serve us.

Send forward a challenger to represent you and I will represent us, Goliath says. And it's kind of winner takes all. Whoever wins, then the other group, the other army, the other nation will become the slaves of that nation.

[ 4 : 00 ] And what's the Israelites' response? Well, it's safe to say there aren't many volunteers. Verse 11. When Saul and all the Israelites heard the words of the Philistine, and they were dismayed and greatly afraid.

And we read later on that whenever the Israelites saw the man, saw Goliath, they all fled from him in great terror. Goliath kind of delivers this challenge and suddenly all the Israelites are kind of studying their sandals, desperate not to kind of sneeze or volunteer by accident or anything like that.

That the people of Israel, that their brightest and best, even the king himself, Saul, that they're terrified. They're paralyzed. Because they're completely powerless in the face of this opponent who is stronger than them, who is defying them and who is defying their God.

And that is the situation that this chapter lays out for us as we look at what the Bible has to say about it. And it's a really good time for us to stop and think, well, actually, what relevance does this story have for us today?

Because it's a brilliant story. But actually, what's the point of it? Well, I think to understand that, it helps us if we really think about kind of the big picture of the Bible and how it all ties together.

[ 5 : 21 ] Throughout the Bible, David, who we're going to meet in this story, David, who later on in the Bible will become King David. But throughout the Bible, David is not just a kind of a good lad.

He's not just a kind of an example for us to follow. David is God's chosen king over his people, over the people of Israel. And it's in that role as God's leader of his people that he's ultimately a forerunner or a picture or a pointer toward Jesus Christ, who will come as the ultimate king, the ultimate leader over God's people.

We've seen before, in fact, it's the kind of the tagline from the Bible that the guys just got there, how every story whispers his name. The whole of the Bible is pointing us to Jesus.

And so in that way, that the physical events of David's life are a model of the spiritual realities that are fulfilled in Jesus. And it's with that in mind, when we turn back to Goliath, we see that this seemingly undefeatable enemy is not simply perhaps the bully who we have to face at school or at work.

He's not just the kind of the worries that we carry around that can intimidate and scare us. He's far bigger than that. Goliath here is the one who is opposing God's people and ultimately his anointed king.

[ 6 : 49 ] And so in Goliath, what we're really looking at is wickedness. It is Satan. It is sin personified. And this chapter lays out for us a battle between God's anointed and God's opponent.

And so then where do we find ourselves in this story? We like to kind of think we're the hero, don't we? We like to think, oh, I'll be David. Actually, we find ourselves in this story as the terrified people in the Israelite army.

We find ourselves as people who are weak, who are scared, who are unable to do anything in the face of this undefeatable foe. And that's why it's so important.

That's why I want to kind of labor this point that we see how big and serious Goliath is. Because that gives us the picture, the understanding of how big and serious the problem of sin is.

It is an undefeatable opponent for us in our own strength. The book of Romans in the New Testament, after Jesus has come, but it says this, that in our natural state on our own, we're powerless in the face of sin.

[ 8 : 00 ] It says that sin is our master. It says that we're slaves to sin. And that's Goliath's threat here, isn't it, in verse 9. You shall become our subjects and serve us. And that is the reality.

That in our own strength, sin is this undefeatable enemy. We're subject to its power as we constantly fall into sin. And also we're subject to its penalty. The punishment that we deserve because of our sin.

We're often taught, aren't we, to think that if we could just get rid of God, if we could get away from God's rules, if we could get away from the way of life that the Bible talks about, well, there we would find freedom and joy and all this kind of good stuff.

We're told, you know, whatever it is, whether it's going out drinking, whether it's wanting just to have more stuff, whether it's kind of chasing the life that other people have, whether it's using people to kind of put them down, to lift ourselves up and speaking harshly about them.

Now, we're told that actually that way of life that the Bible calls sin, and actually that brings freedom, that brings success, that brings joy, it will make us happy. Actually, the Bible says that that's miserable.

[ 9 : 11 ] The Bible says that living apart from God is not joyful or satisfying. In fact, the language it uses time and time again is that it enslaves us. It means that we're stuck.

It means that we have no hope. We're very capable of getting ourselves into this way of life called sin, but then there's absolutely nothing we can do about getting ourselves out of it.

And just like for the Israelite army, for Goliath, it is an undefeatable enemy. At least the point is, undefeatable by us. And so, just like the Israelites, just like Bonnie Tyler once sung, you know, we need a hero.

Just like the Israelites, we need someone who will go forward for us to be our champion. And that, of course, leads us then here, doesn't it, to David. And that's the second character that we're going to look at here.

And in David, we see, having seen an undefeatable enemy, we now see an unlikely hero. David, at this point, is a young shepherd.

[ 10 : 13 ] David, essentially, at this point, is still a bit of a nobody. And he's sent to the battle lines to see his older brothers, to take them some grain and some bread and some cheese. It's not an important job.

And yet he arrives and he hears Goliath's taunts. And what is David's response in contrast to what we've seen so far? David says this, verse 26, How dare this man speak like that about God and his people?

Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God? And David puts himself forward to fight.

And word of this eventually gets back to Saul, who's the king. What's the first thing Saul says? No way, he says. You're too small. You know, look at this guy and look at you. David doesn't look like a hero.

But he puts forward his case in verses 34 down to 37. He says as a shepherd, he's struck down lions and bears. And Goliath will be just like one of them.

[ 11 : 16 ] But look at the reason for his confidence. It's not that David is saying he's kind of a big head. It's not that he's saying that this kind of nine foot and a half kind of giant is just the same as a lion and David's able to defeat them in his own strength.

No, verse 37. He says this, The Lord who rescued me from the port of the lion and the port of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine.

David knows that it is God who has been with him in the past. And it is God again who will give him this victory. And David knows that ultimately it is God who will defend his name.

It is God who will defend his people. And so Saul kind of reluctantly, I suppose, agrees. He tries to give David his armor but it doesn't fit. Eventually David goes out.

He doesn't even have a sword. Kind of every detail recorded about David is there to make him look completely out of his depth to contrast him to the giant sword.

[ 12 : 19 ] As man kind of looks on the outward appearance, David has no chance against this giant who's been described. And yet he is the one who goes forward.

I wonder if you can imagine yourself in the Israelite army, a kind of a mixture of relief. At last someone's gone forward. It doesn't have to be me. There are also perhaps a degree of concern because who is it?

It's that boy that bought the sandwiches. You know, compared to Goliath, he looks tiny. He's not even got any armor. He's carrying a stick. You know, this is not what we had in mind. This is not surely the champion we were expecting.

We've got no chance. Whose idea was this? And Goliath himself thinks the same. Am I a dog that you come at me with sticks? This will be even easier than he thought.

And he curses David by his gods. And yet then David speaks. And we hear now a kind of a true description of the situation. This might not be what it looks like to the untrained eye, but here's David's description that takes God into account.

[ 13 : 25 ] Verses 45 down to 47. You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against 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 hands and I'll strike you down and cut off your head. This day I will give the bodies of the Philistine army to the birds and to the wild animals and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel.

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.

And that's David's analysis of the situation. And we see that that is exactly the case. The battle itself, after all this build-up, after all this time, is described very quickly.

Two verses, one stone, and Goliath is dead. And this was not a kind of clash of the titans. This wasn't a big kind of back and forward battle.

[ 14 : 28 ] This wasn't like the fight at the end of the James Bond films where it kind of goes on and on and on until he eventually wins. It's a walkover. Goliath is down and out in the first seconds of the first round.

And we see the truth of what David said. You might have this armor or weapons. You might look very powerful. But here you're fighting against the Lord of hosts, the God of all creation. As victory shows, as David has said he would to everyone around, that the Lord saves.

Nobody has looked at David and thought, oh, he was stronger than we thought. Everyone has seen that this is God's victory. This is God who's done that. And again here, David, the unlikely hero, is pointing us forward to our ultimate hero.

And because it's in Jesus that we have a representative who's gone forward on our behalf. It is Jesus who is the one that has defeated that enemy of sin and Satan who has ruled over us, who we're powerless against.

It's Jesus who's triumphed. He has won. And how did he do that? Well, he did it, just as in this story. He did it through what looked weak. He did it through what looked like a terrible idea.

[ 15 : 45 ] He did it through what looked like what was going to be an abject failure. It was through the cross. It was through his death. He's the most unlikely hero we could imagine.

And yet just as David used Goliath's own sword to cut off the giant's head, so it's the same that it's the object which was meant to spell the end for Jesus.

It is the cross, which is how he has defeated his enemies and our enemies forever. It's through his death and resurrection Jesus defeated sin once and for all.

He paid that penalty that we deserve on the cross. He broke that hold, that slavery that sin has over us. And so the story of the Bible is not one that says you can be David, you can be a hero.

The story of the Bible is one that says we have a hero, Jesus. And that hero, and only that hero, can save us from the sin and the opposition and the oppression that we're powerless to do anything about in our own strength.

[ 16 : 49 ] But he has done that. And we can look back with that, with real certainty. As victory shows, as David said, there is a God who saves. There is a God who looks after his people.

And that it's not done through military force or political intervention, but it has been done by God himself. And the story, the invitation really of the Bible is to put our trust in that champion, in Jesus Christ.

He is the hero. And so what does that then look like, to trust in him? What does it look like to live in his victory? Well, that leads us finally, after an undefeatable enemy, an unlikely hero, our third and final set of characters, an unrecognizable people.

The last people we see here are the Israelite army. And this now is where we find ourselves in this story. We find ourselves in this crowd, those who previously were kind of looking on, who'd been powerless, who'd been trapped, who'd been scared.

But in these last few verses, we see them transformed. They're unrecognizable. As soon as David has won the victory, we read, verse 52, that the men of Israel and Judah surged forward with a shout and pursued the Philistines.

[ 18 : 10 ] Verse 53, they plundered the camp. You know, all of a sudden, these kind of shy and retiring Israelites are kind of full of beans, aren't they? Where before they'd been afraid and running away, well, now they're running after the Philistines.

They're winning victories over their enemies. They're plundering the camp. They're reaping the rich rewards of the victory that David had won, and yet which they can all share in.

Try and get your minds around this. I wonder if you can cast your mind back to the day that Andy Murray won Wimbledon. I was trying to think of a more recent major Scottish or British victory.

It was quite difficult, actually. So if you can think of another one, that's fine. I could only think of Andy Murray. Across the country, people celebrated. They went crazy. They'd won. There were kind of street parties and flags and all sorts of stuff.

In reality, very few of those supporters had anything to do with the result at all. I think I remember kind of shouting at the television. I don't know if that helped or not in the big picture.

- [ 19 : 13 ] But the fact was that we could join in and celebrate and share that victory because our man, our representative, had won, had been victorious. Well, that is what happens here. Because David has won. The people have won. They celebrate victory. They grow out with confidence. As people are on the winning side, able to play their part. They're able to defeat whatever remains of this army.
- No longer captives to something more powerful. And this is the picture of where we now stand if we trust in Jesus. If we've accepted Jesus' victory over sin and Satan on the cross in our behalf as our representative.
- Because he has won. We have won. And the devil still tries to tell us that he has power over us. The devil still tries to say that there are sins and temptations that we'll never be able to stand up against.
- That we're still captives. But if we have trusted in Jesus, that is not the case. If we have trusted in Jesus, the battle goes on. We're still involved in a challenge.
- [ 20 : 22 ] We saw that last week at the close of Ephesians. It's a battle, but we are on the winning side. That victory is assured. The resurrection has happened.
- We're able to overcome those temptations. And we are free from that punishment that we deserve because Jesus has taken that on the cross. Let me read as we come to a close some great words from the book again of Romans that tell us what our true position is if we've trusted in Jesus, in his death on the cross and his resurrection.
- Words that speak about the unrecognizable people that we have become if we trust in this victory that Jesus has won on our behalf. Paul writes this, that we should no longer be slaves to sin because anyone who's died, that is anyone who has accepted Jesus' death in our place, anyone who has died with Christ has been set free from sin.
- And he goes on to continue, in the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.
- Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life.
- [ 21 : 45 ] And offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness. righteousness. For sin shall no longer be your master because you are not under the law but under grace.
- These unrecognizable people that we see at the end of chapter 17 here tearing after their enemies, gaining victory, are a huge encouragement for all of us.
- And certainly, I include me in this, for all of us who have ongoing struggles with sin. For all of us who right now can think of parts of our life that we think, I'll never be able to change that, I'll never be able to get over that, I can't do it.
- These people here are these transformed people. Paul's teaching from Romans is a confirmation that that is a lie. That because of Jesus' victory through the cross, we are freed from the power and slavery of sin.
- Sin does not have dominion over us. That we are able through his strength to say no, that we are fighting against a defeated enemy. That we can be unrecognizable people, living lives fully given to God, seeking to become more and more like Jesus because of what he's done.
- [ 23 : 02 ] And that is not, that is life and life to the full, that is not slavery, that is freedom. If we've not accepted Jesus as that hero, as that champion who's won in our place, then really still, we're still at the start of chapter 17 then.
- That leaves us cowering in the face of an opponent that we can't defeat. That leaves us stuck in this cycle really of trying to make ourselves better, trying to make ourselves good enough, trying to do all this in our own strength.

The Bible says that we can't do that. Our own experience will tell us that we can't do that. If we think that we can, then we're misunderstanding just how perfect and holy God is, just how high his standards are.

And also how serious and dangerous our sin is, that it is an enemy that we cannot defeat on our own. But there's the promise of the one who won that victory for us, that there is a hero, that there is Jesus Christ, that if we trust in him, that then we can be transformed, unrecognizable people, free to live a life of purpose and meaning, a life that still has struggles, a life where we will certainly still make mistakes, but a life where, thanks to Jesus, we know that we are on the winning side as he has won the victory and we follow him, we live in light of that.

All right, let me pray. Let's pray.