

## David, Pt.2: a courageous heart

Sermon Of 2020-01-10

By Major Brian Coles

[Run slides 1-7 / play video, slide 8] Wow! What courage David has.

Just to recap, we discovered last week that to develop a heart for God we, like David,

will develop hearts that are fully abandoned to him. Hearts that are deeply reflective. And hearts that love others fully.

[slide 9] Today, as we continue to study the life of David, we're going to discover 2 ways we can develop a courageous heart,

which is another aspect of what having a heart for God looks like.

Please open your Bibles to 1 Sam. 17.

Let me set the stage for this famous and significant event. I'm indebted to Malcolm Gladwell for his insights here.

[slide 10] At the heart of ancient Palestine is the region known as the Shef-ay-lah' [use laser pointer].

Looking at this satellite image we see that the Shef-ay-lah' is a series of ridges and valleys

connecting the Judean Mountains to the east, with the wide flat expanse of the Mediterranean coastal plain.

It's an area of breathtaking beauty, home to vineyards and wheat fields and forests of sycamore and terebinth. It's also of great strategic importance.

Over the centuries, numerous battles have been fought for control of the region because the valleys rising from the Mediterranean coastal plain

offer those living there a clear path to the cities of Hebron, Bethlehem, and Jerusalem in the Judean highlands.

[slide 11] But the most storied valley, as you can see in our next image, is the Ay-lah' valley.

The Ay-lah' valley is where Saladin faced off against the Knights of the Crusades in the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

It played a central role in the Maccabean wars with Syria more than a thousand years before that.

And, most famously, during the days of the Old Testament, it is where the fledgling Kingdom of Israel squares off against the mighty armies of the Philistines.

[slide 12] The Philistines were a seafaring people from Crete, who invaded the Mediterranean coast during the period of the Book of Judges [at the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> century B.C.]

They established 5 major cities on the Coastal Plain – Gaza, Asheklon, Ashdod, Edom, and Gath. Gath grew giants like B.C. grows Douglas Firs.

And one of the main characters in our story is from Gath. Can you guess who?

[slide 13, blank] The Israelites are clustered in the rugged hill country of Judah under the leadership of King Saul.

In the second half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century BC, the Philistines begin moving east, winding their way up along the floor of the Ay-law' valley.

Their goal is to capture the mountain ridge near Bethlehem and conquer Israel.

The Philistines, who possess superior weaponry to the Israelites, are battle-tested warriors and are very dangerous.

Alarmed by this move, Saul gathers his men, hurries down from the mountains, and prepares for war.

[slide 14] We learn in v.1 that the Philistines set up camp along the southern ridge of the Ay-law', at Eh'-fes dam-meem' between So-ko' and Az-ay-kaw'.

The Israelites pitched their tents on the other side, along the northern ridge, which left the two armies looking across the valley at each other.

Neither dared to move. To attack means descending down the hill and then making a suicidal climb up the enemy's ridge on the other side.

Finally, the Philistines have had enough. [slide 15] We read in v.4 that they send their champion warrior, Goliath, down into the valley to resolve the deadlock one on one.

Goliath would have been a very high draft pick in the NBA.

According to the Hebrew text he is 3m tall [9'9"]. According to the LXX, the Gk. translation of the OT, he is a little over 2m tall [6'9"].

Either way, he is still a formidable and frightening foe, tougher than a \$2 steak.

Making him even more formidable and frightening is his state-of-the-art armour and weaponry.

V.5f, he's wearing a bronze helmet and has full body armor weighing 57 kgs [125 lbs.]

On his legs he's wearing bronze greaves or shin protectors.

He has a javelin or scimitar slung on his back.

And he carries a special short-range spear with a shaft as "thick as a weaver's beam." It's iron blade tip weighs 7 kgs [15 lbs].

As historian Moshe Garsiel writes, "To the Israelites, this extraordinary spear, with its heavy shaft plus long and heavy iron blade,

when hurled by Goliath's strong arm, seemed capable of piercing any bronze shield and bronze armor together."

One look at this guy and you realize he's not someone you want to mess with. In the words of songwriter Jim Croce,

"You don't tug on Superman's cape.  
You don't spit into the wind.

You don't pull the mask off an 'ole Lone Ranger, and you don't mess around with Jim."

That's Goliath – you don't mess around with him.

Not only does Goliath look intimidating, he sounds intimidating.

In v.8, the giant shouts across the valley with a thunderous voice, "Choose you a man and let him come down to me!"

In other words, "I challenge you to send out your champion, and we'll settle this whole deal *mano-a-mano*, winner-take-all."

This is a common practice in the ancient world.

Two sides in a conflict will seek to avoid the heavy bloodshed of open battle by choosing one warrior to represent each side in a duel to the death.

This is what Goliath is expecting— a warrior like himself to come forward for close combat.

It never occurs to him that the battle would be fought on anything other than these terms.

There's a brief silence, but no one from the Israelite camp moves. Who can possibly defeat such a terrifying opponent?

The silence is broken by Goliath's thunderous voice again in v.10, "I defy the ranks of Israel!"

Literally, "I scorn you, I shame you, I spit on you." His loud taunt is intended to demoralize and intimidate his opponent.

[slide 16] Of course, the obvious guy to face Goliath is King Saul. He's the one the people chose to fight for them in the first place!

But Saul is less than enthusiastic about taking on Goliath. In fact, after hearing Goliath's words, we read in v.11 that Saul and his army are paralyzed by fear.

So instead of doing what he is supposed to do and fight Goliath, Saul offers a compensation package to his soldiers.

He says, paraphrasing v.25, “To any soldier in Israel who can defeat this giant,

I’ll give you great wealth, tax-exempt status for the rest of your life, and, as an added bonus, I’ll let you marry my daughter.”

I’m not sure how his daughter feels about this - somehow, I doubt Saul is going to be voted Father of the Year!

**[slide 17, blank]** But even with this enticing compensation package nobody comes forward.

How long has your Goliath challenged you – the Goliath of unemployment, of sickness, of addiction, of a past you can’t escape, or a future you can’t face?

For 40 days, morning and night, this Goliath continues challenging, taunting, and terrifying the Israelite army.

**[slide 18]** But, on the 41<sup>st</sup> day, a scrawny little shepherd boy, named David, takes on a task that nobody else will.

He says to King Saul in v.32, “Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him.”

Saul dismissively denies David’s courageous request. Look at v.33,

“You cannot go against this Philistine to do battle with him, for you are only a boy and he’s been a man of war from his youth.”

But Davis is adamant. I’ve faced more ferocious opponents than this, he argues in v.34ff.

“When the lion or the bear would come and carry off a sheep from the flock, I went after it, struck it, and rescued it from its jaws.

When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it, and killed it.

This uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God.”

Wow! What courage David displays.

Realizing he is out of options, Saul reluctantly relents, and grants David his request. “Go, and God be with you,” he says in v.37.

Saul then attempts to dress David his own coat of armour and helmet, so at least he’ll have a fighting chance.

David must have looked quite comical in Saul’s armour. Imagine a 32 short wearing a 52 long!

David respectfully tells the King, v.39, “I can’t move in this stuff. I’m not used to it.”

Instead, we read in the next verse, he takes his staff in his hand, chooses 5 smooth stones from a nearby stream,

puts them in the pouch of his shepherd’s bag, carries his sling in his other hand, and steadily moves toward the giant standing in the valley.

Goliath looks at his scrawny little opponent coming toward him and is insulted. He’s expecting to do battle with a seasoned warrior.

Instead, he sees a small shepherd boy who seems to want to use his wooden shepherds’ staff as a club against Goliath’s iron-sharpened sword.

[slide 19] Look at v.43. “Am I a dog,” Goliath says, gesturing at David’s staff, “that you should come to me with sticks?”

“Come to me, that I may give your flesh to the birds of the heavens and the beasts of the field.”

When Goliath says “come to me” in v.44, he means come right up close so they can fight at close quarters.

When Saul tries to dress David in his armour and give him his sword, he is operating under the same assumption.

He assumes David is going to fight Goliath in close combat.

David, however, has no intention of honouring the rituals of single combat.

[slide 20] He intends to fight Goliath the same way he learned to fight wild animals - as a slinger, a projectile warrior.

Slinging takes an extraordinary amount of skill and practice. But in experienced hands, the sling is a devastating weapon.

In the Old Testament Book of Judges 20.16, slingers are described as being accurate within a “hair’s breadth.”

Imagine standing in front of a Major League Baseball pitcher throwing a 160 km per hour fastball at your head.

That’s what facing a slinger is like— only what’s being thrown is not a ball of cork and leather but a solid rock.

As Goliath begins to move in for the attack, David takes a rock out of his pouch puts it into his sling,

whips it around and around, faster and faster, while aiming his projectile at Goliath’s forehead - the giant’s only point of vulnerability.

Eitan Hirsch, a ballistics expert with the Israeli Defense Forces, did a series of calculations showing that

a typical-size stone hurled by an expert slinger at a distance of 35 meters, would have hit Goliath’s head with a velocity of 34 meters per second - more than enough to penetrate his skull and render him unconscious or dead.

David’s rock hit its target dead on, and Goliath goes down with a thud.

David runs up to his fallen opponent, draws the giant’s sword from its scabbard, and cuts off his head.

When the rest of the Philistine army sees that their champion warrior is dead, they turn and run like a dog with its tail between his legs.

[slide 21, blank] This is a story of a kid with a courageous heart. I think all of us would like to develop the kind of courage David demonstrates.

But if you look carefully at this story, one of the things you'll discover is it takes time to develop a courageous heart.

David is developing a courageous heart long before the day he challenges Goliath.

You're living under an illusion if you think that when you face your giant, your Goliath, you can just develop a courageous heart out of the blue. It just doesn't happen that way.

The truth is if you wait until then, you probably won't fair too well. That's what happened to Mike.

Mike died and arrived at the pearly gates of heaven.

Peter greets him and says, "Well, I can't find in your record that you did anything particularly good or bad.

Can you tell me of one really impressive deed you did?" [bad theology I know but it makes my point!]

Mike says, "Well, one time I saw some bikers harassing a young woman.

I stopped my car, took out a tire iron, walked up to their leader - a huge, hairy, ugly guy, full of tattoos.

He was wearing a nose ring. So I reached up and ripped that ring right out of his nose and said, "You leave this girl alone."

Then I stared at all of them and said, 'Now get out of here, every one of you, or you'll have to answer personally to me!'

Peter is quite impressed. "When did this happen?" he asks Mike. "Oh, about two minutes ago."

You've got to think about that one for a minute.

If you wait until you're facing your giant, your Goliath, to be courageous, you probably won't fair too well.



Developing a courageous heart like David's happens over time.

David faces situations in his life that require courage before he ever faces Goliath.

That brings us to the first of 2 ways David develops a courageous heart - 2 ways we too can develop courageous hearts,

which is another aspect of what developing a heart for God looks like.

What then, is the 1<sup>st</sup> way we can develop a courageous heart? [**slide 22**]

### **Have Confidence In The Lord God Almighty When Tackling Your Everyday Challenges.**

David develops a courageous heart by having confidence in the Lord God Almighty as he tackles his everyday challenges.

He talks about this when explaining to King Saul why he's ready to take on Goliath in vs.34-37.

"I've taken on lions and bears and killed them. I'll take on this Philistine like one of them."

By having confidence in the Lord God Almighty while tackling his everyday challenges as a shepherd to protect the sheep, David is developing a courageous heart.

Take note, David doesn't say, "I learned that I could defeat lions and bears with my own skill and cunning."

He says in v.37 that the Lord will rescue him. He has confidence in God to rescue him.

You can read about God rescuing people, but you will only come to believe it and know it when you test it out for yourself in real life.

Maybe you're having difficulty in a r'ship. You can just avoid the situation or you can pray,

“God, with your help, I’m going to tackle this lion in my life.” As you do, your heart will grow a little more courageous.

Maybe you are dealing with an addiction. You can deny you have a problem or you can pray, “God, with your help, I’m going to tackle this bear I’m facing.”

David develops a courageous heart by having confidence in the Lord as he tackles his everyday challenges - like lions and bears.

If he’d waited until he faced Goliath, he may have been disheartened and terrified like everyone else. But he doesn’t.

He puts his confidence in the Lord Almighty as he tackles his everyday challenges - lions and bears. God delivers him. And David’s heart grows more courageous.

That’s the first way to develop a courageous heart – have confidence in the Lord God Almighty when tackling your everyday challenges.

[What then, is the 2<sup>nd</sup> way to develop a courageous heart?] [slide 23]

### **Have Confidence In The Lord God Almighty When Facing Your Giants.**

David has confidence in the Lord God Almighty when he faces Goliath.

The Philistine giant keeps coming closer to David. He looks David over and sees that he is little more than a boy and he despises him.

“Come here,” he says in v.44, “and I’ll give your flesh to the birds and the wild animals!”

Goliath is doing a lot of trash talking. That’s standard procedure before a battle in those days.

David’s never been in this situation before, so what does he do? Basically he repeats what he hears Goliath say, v.46,

“Oh ya, well I’ll give your flesh to the birds and to the beasts.” Not original, but David’s new at this.

However, it's his words in v.45 which provide a good summary of the whole story.

"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."

David sees his giant, but he sees his God more. His courage comes from his confidence in the Lord Almighty, God of the armies of Israel.

As God delivered him from his everyday challenges – facing down lions and bears - so David is confident God will deliver him from this giant now.

[slide 24, blank] What giant do you face right now - a giant of unemployment, sickness, mental illness, addiction, financial stress, difficulties in a relationship, or uncertainty about your future?

Whatever your giant is it's nothing that the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel can't handle.

Goliath has been through a lot of battles before but never one like this. Imagine his shock as he sees David running quickly toward him, v.48.

Here's a scrawny little kid with no armour, no sword, no javelin, no spear, no experience, nothing but his staff, some stones, and his sling.

David takes up his position, reaches into his bag, takes out a stone and puts it into the sling.

The only sound in the valley is the Sshhhwww, Sshhhww, Sshhhww of the swirling sling.

The stone torpedoes through the air and finds its mark in the skull of Goliath. His eyes cross, his legs buckle, and he topples to the ground like a ton of bricks.

Goliath was ready for a battle, but he never expected this.

Author Bill McKee said that the last thought Goliath had as the stone hit him was, "Nothing like this ever entered my mind!"

David, in v.51, then runs over to Goliath, yanks Goliath's sword from its sheath and cuts off his head.

I guess you could say David knew how to get a head of his giant!

Whatever giant you're facing... a health issue, a fear of failure, dealing with a difficult r'ship, or a decision about your future,

if you let it intimidate you and convince you that you're helpless, then like Saul and his army, you'll lose heart and live in fear.

But if you face your Goliath with your confidence in the Lord God Almighty, as David does,

your Goliath doesn't stand a chance, because God is stronger than any foe this world can throw at you.

I'm going to ask that you take hold of the stone you received when you came in here this morning and stand with me.

We're going to sing, and if I go off-key, well, you know what to do with your stones. Just kidding!

The central message of this story is clear. It's spelled out for us over and over again.

V.37: "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."

V.45: "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."

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

Friends, this is not a story about David's raw skill with a slingshot or about his willingness to take a risk.

This is a story about his confidence in the Lord God Almighty, a confidence that helps him to develop a courageous heart.

The story of your life need not be a story about your skill or willingness to take a risk.

It can be a story about having confidence in the Lord Almighty when facing not only your everyday challenges, but also your giants.

I don't know how big your Goliath is, but I'll guarantee you this: he's not bigger than the Lord Almighty, God of the armies of Israel.

Stay focused on him. Live with a bold confidence in him, in what he has done, and what he still can do.

I want you to take your stone with you all week long. Put it in your purse, your pocket, in your bathroom –

someplace where it'll be a reminder to you that whatever the giant is you face in life, the battle is the Lord's.

Sing: The Battle Belongs to the Lord CH 732 P