

⁴A challenger who represented the Philistines came out from the camp of the Philistines. He was named Goliath of Gath. He was nine feet, six inches tall. ⁵He had a bronze helmet on his head, and he wore scaled body armor, which was made of more than one hundred pounds of bronze. ⁶He had bronze greaves on his shins and a bronze spear slung between his shoulders. ⁷The shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and his spearhead was made of fifteen pounds of iron. His shield bearer went out ahead of him.

⁸He would stand up and shout to the armies of Israel, "Why have you come out to line up in battle formation? I am a Philistine, and you are servants of Saul, aren't you? Choose a man to represent you, and let him come down to me. ⁹If he is able to fight with me and kill me, we will be your servants. But if I overcome him and kill him, you will become our servants, and you will serve us." ¹⁰The Philistine would say, "I defy the ranks of Israel today! Give me a man, and we will fight each other!" ¹¹When Saul and all Israel heard those words of the Philistine, they lost their courage and were terrified.

³²David said to Saul, "Do not let anyone lose heart because of this Philistine! Your servant will go and fight him."

³³But Saul said to David, "You cannot go against this Philistine to fight with him, because you are just a boy, and he has been a warrior since he was a youth."

³⁴David said to Saul, "Your servant has been taking care of his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and took a lamb from the flock, ³⁵I went after it and struck it and rescued the lamb out of its mouth. When the lion reared up against me, I grabbed it by its mane, struck it, and killed it. ³⁶Your servant struck both the lion and the bear. This uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, since he has defied the ranks of the living God."

³⁷David added, "The LORD, who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine."

Saul said to David, "Go then! May the LORD be with you." ³⁸So Saul dressed David in his own gear. He placed a bronze helmet on his head and dressed him in scaled body armor. ³⁹David strapped his sword over his gear. David tried to walk around in them, since he had never trained with this kind of equipment before.

David said to Saul, "I cannot go in these, because I have never trained with them." So David took them off.

⁴⁰Then David took his staff in his hand and picked five smooth stones out of the stream bed and put them into the pouch of his shepherd's bag. He took his sling in his hand and approached the Philistine.

⁴⁵Then David said to the Philistine, "You come against me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD of Armies, the God of the ranks of Israel, whom you have defied.

⁴⁶Today the LORD will hand you over to me. I will strike you down and cut off your head. Today I will give the dead bodies of the army of the Philistines to the birds of the air and to the wild animals of the earth. Then all the earth will know that there is a God in Israel, ⁴⁷and all those gathered here will know that the LORD does not save with sword and spear, for the battle belongs to the LORD, and he will deliver you into our hand."

⁴⁸Then, when the Philistine started advancing to attack David, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine. ⁴⁹David put his hand into his bag, took a stone from it, shot it from his sling, and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell facedown to the ground.

Everybody knows the story of David and Goliath. Even those who don't know it from the Bible know the phrase. It's about weak beating strong and good overcoming evil. But the account of David and Goliath has a message greater than: "trust in the Lord and you can stand up to the Goliath's in your life." While there's some truth there, this account of David and Goliath foreshadows a greater battle, a battle with even bigger consequences.

David was just a kid, not old enough yet to go out to war with the armies of Israel. Instead, while his older brothers were at war, David stayed behind to care for the sheep. But his father Jesse was getting antsy. With his

sons out fighting, he wanted to know how they were doing, so he sent out his youngest son with a care package for his brothers and the other fighting men. What David found when he got there was truly terrifying.

Before the camp of Israel stood the Philistine champion, a nearly ten-foot-tall Goliath. Everything about him was giant, including his weapons and armor. And Goliath was no gentle giant either. He stood before the army of God to mock them and to mock the king God had placed over them. The Philistine people were violent. They were constantly working to expand the boundaries of the kingdom. They'd raid and pillage anywhere they could. They were the greatest enemies of Israel in that time, and Goliath was their fiercest fighter.

Goliath didn't just mock the Israelites. He challenged them: "Choose a man to represent you, and let him come down to me. If he is able to fight with me and kill me, we will be your servants. But if I overcome him and kill him, you will become our servants, and you will serve us. I defy the ranks of Israel today! Give me a man, and we will fight each other!" This was not just a challenge to a mano a mano fight for personal arrogance. This was a battle of nation against nation, of God against god. Goliath would stand as the champion of the Philistine's. Their fate would rest on his strength.

As for the Israelites? Well, no one had stepped forward to represent the people. You'd think Saul, their king, would have gone ahead to serve on behalf of the people. We hear when Saul became king that he was a head taller than his countrymen. But standing in front of Goliath made Saul look small. Saul, like the rest of his fighting men, was afraid. This should be of no surprise though. Saul had already had a falling out with God, with the Lord finally telling him that his throne would be taken away from him. Saul would not be the champion of Israel because Saul's trust was not in the Lord.

This is the situation young David wandered into as he came to drop off the care package and get some intel to relay to dad. But what he saw appalled him. How dare this Philistine mock God's people! David's frustration finally reached the ear of King Saul, who sent for him.

Standing before Saul, David volunteered to fight the giant on behalf of his people and his God. But Saul was skeptical. No one could blame him for thinking this way. Were they really going to send a kid, who was not even old enough to join the army, to fight for the fate of Israel? Certainly, David was brave, but was he able to accomplish the task? He thought so. But he didn't think he could do it because he was so much stronger than Goliath. He knew he could do it because he was fighting for God. He knew he could do it, because David knew a secret Saul did not.

Remember how Saul was told by God that his throne would be taken away because of his rebellion against God's commands? Well, God had already chosen his replacement. In secret, without the king's knowing, the prophet Samuel was sent by God to the house of Jesse to anoint his youngest son to be the next king. I wonder how much that factored into the fact that David was willing to represent his people in a seemingly unwinnable battle. He knew God had made him the next king. He knew that God would not allow his chosen king to lose his life or his people to be taken as slaves. Everyone who heard David speaking with such confidence probably thought he was an arrogant and out of touch kid. But because we know the promises God had made through David, David's confidence doesn't sound crazy at all.

The decision was finally made. The kid would go out and fight for the nation. In Saul's tent, Israel's outgoing king unknowingly placed his armor on Israel's incoming king. But the armor didn't fit. It was too big for David, but in a deeper way, it was inappropriate for the occasion. Saul was looking at this battle as an earthly king. He saw a bigger enemy, and figured he had no chance. He placed his armor on David because he believed this would allow the young man to keep from getting slaughtered long enough for the giant to make a mistake. But David saw this battle for what it was. He trusted that God's hand was upon him, because this battle

was not David versus Goliath, but the true God versus the pretend idols of Philistia. So, David prepared for battle with God's promises in mind. He took his shepherd's staff, five smooth stones, and his slingshot, and went out to the battlefield.

When David arrived to serve as the substitute for his people, Goliath was in shock. "Am I a dog, that you come against me with sticks? Come to me, and I will feed your flesh to the birds of the air and to the wild animals of the countryside." But David was undeterred. Listen to this confession of faith: "You come against me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD of Armies, the God of the ranks of Israel, whom you have defied. Today the LORD will hand you over to me. I will strike you down and cut off your head. Today I will give the dead bodies of the army of the Philistines to the birds of the air and to the wild animals of the earth. Then all the earth will know that there is a God in Israel, and all those gathered here will know that the LORD does not save with sword and spear, for the battle belongs to the LORD, and he will deliver you into our hand." David trusts that the strength of God will accomplish God's good purposes, even if his strength is shown in the weakest of packages.

When Goliath began to advance, ready to make quick work of the Israelite boy, David did not flee. He ran toward Goliath, pulling out his slingshot and whipping a stone right into Goliath's forehead. The giant fell. The victory did not belong to the serpent's seed, Goliath and this nation of unbelief. It belonged to the seed of the woman, Eve's grandson of thousands of years, the king chosen by God to represent the people, not only from the throne, but from the battle line.

But what if I told you this account of David is really just the appetizer to another story, a story with many different names and places, but with similar events? The enemy of God's people stood at the front lines of the battlefield. In his mocking tone he poured out threats. Like Goliath, he called for a battle of champions, a battle for all the marbles. No one could stand against him. All would perish. They would become his slaves forever. No one was willing to step forward and face him. They were all too afraid. They were all too weak.

But one man stepped forward. No one would have chosen him to be their champion. He was just so ordinary, so unimpressive to his fellow countrymen. But he was all they had. They tried to outfit him with everything they thought he'd need for war. But just like Saul, they were thinking in earthly terms. They were thinking that this battle would be won with brute strength. But the armor they tried to force him into just didn't fit. It was not appropriate. Instead, he'd fight a different way.

You see, this champion had a secret too. Unbeknownst to many of his fellow citizens, he too had been anointed, not with oil, but with water. Secretly, God had chosen him to sit on the throne of King David; to rule the people in a way even the great king himself had been unable to.

The representative for God's people stepped forward, not with a sling in hand, but with a wooden cross. And as the enemy charged, he charged back. Up the hill he drove the enemy, like an offensive lineman pushing one of those blocking sleds back. And there, at the top of the hill, the champion of God died. And while that doesn't sound a whole lot like David's story, when the champion died, the giant fell. God's people were saved. The enemy was crushed. The victory did not belong to the serpent's seed, Satan and his demons of rebellion. It belonged to the seed of the woman, Eve's grandson of thousands of years, the king chosen by God to represent the people, not only from the throne, but from the battle line. The victory belonged to great David's greater Son, God's chosen Savior.

This story of David is a foreshadowing of Christ. As the people of the Old Testament saw the power of God's rescue through David, they were given a taste of what God would accomplish in the future through

Christ. One battle for all the marbles. And thankfully, that champion has gone to the battlefield for us. Thankfully he has defeated the giant in death and has taken his life up again so that we know the victory is ours.

On life's battlefield, do not fear, because the lesson is not that we Davids can beat life's Goliaths. It's that our David has already beaten the Goliaths that we face. So, live in confidence, rooted in Jesus, your champion. Amen.