

“The Faith of David”

Devotional Reading: Psalm 27 **Background Scripture:** 1 Samuel 17:1–58

1 Samuel 17:31–37, 45, 48–50 (NIV)

³¹ What David said was overheard and reported to Saul, and Saul sent for him.

³² David said to Saul, “Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him.”

³³ Saul replied, “You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a young man, and he has been a warrior from his youth.”

³⁴ 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, ³⁵ 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. ³⁶ 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. ³⁷ The LORD who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine.”

Saul said to David, “Go, and the LORD be with you.”

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⁴⁵ 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.

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⁴⁸ As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him. ⁴⁹ 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.

⁵⁰ 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.

LESSON AIMS

- **Learning Fact:** To summarize the reason for David’s confidence.
- **Biblical Principle:** To know that the Lord is the one true God, and He is over all things and all beings.
- **Daily Application:** To have the courage of David when facing figurative Goliaths of life.

INTRODUCTION

Courage Without Risk?

Many individuals in history are known for their courage. One such person is Rosa Parks (1913–2005), a Black woman who lived in the segregated South. On December 1, 1955, she challenged segregation laws by refusing to take a different seat on a city bus after the seat she was sitting in was redesignated from “Black” to “White.” This turned out to be a key incident in the American Civil Rights Movement.

Rosa believed in having the courage to do what is right. Courage by definition is exercised at the risk of something—a person’s freedom or even one’s very life. If there’s no risk involved, then there’s no courage involved.

LESSON CONTEXT

The events of the current lesson occur sometime before 1010 B.C., the year that Israel’s kingship transitioned from Saul to David. Prior to the events of this lesson, the prophet Samuel had anointed David to be Saul’s successor as king of Israel (1 Samuel 16:1–13). Having been rejected by the Lord, Saul’s days as king were numbered (see 1 Samuel 15). Even so, Saul looked on David with favor and employed him in personal service (16:14–23)—at least for a time.

David entered the army encampment in 1 Samuel 17 as part of an episode of an Israelite war with the Philistines. David was a late arrival due to the fact that he had been left to tend sheep while his older brothers went off to war (1 Samuel 17:13–14). After several weeks, the war degenerated into something of a stalemate. But the Israelite army seemed ready to break due to low morale (17:11, 24). The reason was the relentless taunts of a Philistine named Goliath, who stood about 9'9" tall (17:4–10). As the lesson begins, David had heard the taunt (17:23) as well as the promise of reward for defeating Goliath (17:25–27). David had also just borne the criticism of his oldest brother for an apparent neglect of duty to attend to sheep left in David's care (17:28).

David's Initiative: 1 Samuel 17:31–37

What David said seems to be that of his volunteering to accept Goliath's challenge to a one-on-one duel (1 Samuel 17:8–10, 26). King *Saul* had been looking for just such a volunteer (17:25), and David's inquiry was promptly passed up the chain of command to the king himself. Saul, for his part, seemed to waste no time in sending for David.

Verse 32 is linked to 1 Samuel 17:11, 24, which reveal the emotional state of the army. History is witness to many instances where low morale was the decisive element in an army's defeat (compare Deuteronomy 20:3; 1 Samuel 14:15). Low morale leads to (and results from) fear, fear leads to panic, and panic leads to rout. Here (in v. 32 of today's lesson) David tries to encourage Saul.

1. On what initiative did David volunteer to fight Goliath? What did David communicate to King Saul? (1 Samuel 17:31-32)

This was not the first time that King *Saul* had encountered *David*. The two were actually well acquainted, given David's service in the king's court heretofore (1 Samuel 16:14–23). Saul's comment to David, "You are only a boy" may indicate that the young man was under the age of 20, thus ineligible to be in the army (Numbers 1:3; 26:2). However, David is not thinking of going in his own strength!

King Saul could only see the contrast between David as a weak youth and the Philistine Goliath as a *warrior from his youth*. But David stepped forward with a confidence that defied this logic.

2. What skepticism did King Saul express regarding David's offer to fight Goliath? (1 Samuel 17:33)

What Do You Think?

What current situation requires you to show brave leadership?

Digging Deeper

Can you choose to grow in courage? How, or why not?

David had experienced the power of God in his own life and he knew that the Lord could turn weakness into power. While caring for the sheep, David had killed a lion and a bear, and he knew that the Lord could deliver him out of the hand of Goliath. It's as though he sees Goliath as just another animal attacking God's flock! Since Goliath had "defied the armies of the living God" (v. 36b), he did not stand a chance. God prepared David for this occasion, for the private victories make possible the public victories! Be prepared; you never know when your opportunity will come.

3. How did David respond to Saul's skepticism? (1 Samuel 17:34-37a)

What Do You Think?

What situations from your past give you confidence in your own abilities?

Digging Deeper

How do you balance confidence in yourself and in the Lord so that it doesn't become arrogance or yield dependence on yourself?

King *Saul* didn't attempt to challenge David's passionate belief. Although Saul realized that he himself no longer had the favor of *the Lord* (1 Samuel 15:10, 24, 26; 16:14), his entreaty on David's behalf seems genuine. This prayer "Go, and the Lord be with you" expression gives us insight into Saul's belief that the Lord would still act on Israel's behalf. Later, the Lord's favor toward David and disfavor toward Saul will become a source of fear for the king (18:12).

4. How did Saul respond to David's logic and passion? (1 Samuel 17:37b)

What Do You Think?

How can you encourage young people to exercise wise leadership?

Digging Deeper

What cautions need to be considered when empowering a leader of any age?

Battle's Outcome: 1 Samuel 17:45, 48–50

In the intervening verses not part of the lesson text, *David* rejected wearing battle gear; instead, he chose to take his staff, stones, and sling (1 Samuel 17:38–40).

David's identification of each combatant's support is insightful. For David to *come ... in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel* indicates reliance on protection from a divine source. Note that David did not say, "I come to you with a sling and a stone!" By contrast, mention of Goliath's *sword, spear, and javelin* (shield) indicate that man's reliance on his own skills. The nature and dimensions of his weapons as described in 1 Samuel 17:5–7 do not seem to have intimidated David in the least.

5. How did David display his confidence? (1 Samuel 17:45)

No doubt, Goliath had heard enough "trash talk" (17:44–46) and moved closer to attack David. This indicates that a close-range battle was to come. No archery would be involved (contrast 2 Kings 9:23–24). So each combatant moved to close the distance, to reach the optimum range for their respective weapons.

With no hesitation "David ran quickly toward" Goliath the giant. David had learned to trust God, and as a faithful guardian of the flock, he had mastered the use of the sling. David had confident faith in God because he had found Him dependable in the crises of life, and he knew that the Lord would not desert him now. The Spirit of God lived in David's body and would enable him to win the battle.

6. How did Goliath respond? (1 Samuel 17:48)

David reached into his bag and pulled out a stone and slung it towards the giant. The stone sank into the Goliath's forehead, and he fell on his face before the two armies dead!

David's tremendous faith and courage is matched by his skill with a sling. To hit a forehead—which is only a few square inches—with a sling involves incredible marksmanship! Expert slingers would come to be seen as snipers on ancient battlefields. The weapon is deadly when slinging a stone with enough force, as here (compare Judges 20:16). Before Goliath even knew what was happening, the stone hit the very spot that his armor didn't cover. He had received the penalty due for his blasphemy (Leviticus 24:16).

With David's skill and courage duly noted, the battle was ultimately between the one, true God of Israel and the fictitious gods of the Philistines; we take special note of how each combatant saw it this way (1 Samuel 17:43, 45–46).

Verse 50 of today's lesson again notes the minimal weaponry of *David*. As the encounter had begun, David had predicted that he would cut off Goliath's head (1 Samuel 17:46), but David prevailed *without a sword in his hand*. This meant that for David to cut off the head of *the Philistine*, he would have to use Goliath's sword to do so. And that's exactly what happened (17:51). David stood over the fallen giant (not in today's lesson text), took out the giant's sword, and cut off his head!

This battle validated David's anointing as the king to replace Saul (1 Samuel 16:1-13). And it would not be the last time David would use Goliath's sword (21:9-10).

7. What ensued next? (1 Samuel 17:49-50)

What Do You Think?

What are some spiritual weapons Christians have that the world might consider weak or ineffective (consider 2 Corinthians 10:4)?

Digging Deeper

What Bible verses inform your answer?

CONCLUSION

Faith and Responsibility

Faith and responsibility are key aspects of walking with God. Faith is our decision to follow the Lord, and responsibility is how we live out our faith on this earth. If we step out in confidence to bring the living God to others, we love as the Lord loves us.

The key factor of the violent encounter in the lesson was that there was no doubt whom David served and whom Goliath served. Can the same be said of you?

PRAYER

Lord, may we grow in courage in our faith. May people see the love of Jesus as He guides our steps through the Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

Make sure others know whom you serve.