

1 Samuel 17:20-30

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David learns of Goliath and angers his oldest brother with his curiosity and his fearless speech upon hearing of the seemingly unbeatable Philistine champion.

David was quick to obey what Jesse had commanded him, waking up early in the morning to leave Bethlehem for the Valley of Elah. (See map in side bar) This would have been approximately a twenty-five-mile journey. David left the flock with a keeper and took the ephah of roasted grain, the ten loaves, and ten cuts of cheese that Jesse had commanded him to bring. After approximately 8 hours of travel, David arrives at the circle of the camp while the army was going out in battle array shouting the war cry. This war cry could have consisted of people shouting but also could have been the sound of ram's horns being blown in alarm. Israel and the Philistines drew up in battle array, army against army. We are told earlier in verse 3 that Israel camped on one mountain and the Philistines on the other mountain with the Valley of Elah in between them.

Then David left his baggage in the care of the baggage keeper, then ran to the battle line and entered in order to greet his brothers. It was necessary to have a baggage keeper located on the edge of the camp to prevent unapproved items on the battle line that could hinder the fighting. As David was talking with his brothers and the other men on the front, Goliath the champion, the Philistine from Gath, came out from the army of the Philistines, and he spoke the same pompous words of blasphemy against the armies of Israel and thus the God of Israel. David heard Goliath speak with his usual taunts.

When all the men of Israel saw Goliath's size and heard his demoralizing words, fear was struck in the hearts of the men of Israel and they fled from him and were greatly afraid. The men of Israel said, "Have you seen this man who is coming up? Surely he is coming up to defy Israel. The men are clearly awed at Goliath, and afraid. But they are also intrigued by the opportunity to be a champion for Israel and gain the promised reward. In addition to expressing awe, they note that it will be that the king will enrich the man who kills him with great riches and will give him his daughter and make his father's house free in Israel."

The promised reward has several facets:

- *The king will enrich the man who kills Goliath*
- *The reward will be large, it will include great riches*
- *The one who slays Goliath is promised the daughter of the king as a wife, making the champion a member of the royal family*
- *The champion's father's house will be free from taxation*

This is an impressive incentive package.

Despite the promised reward, no one was stepping forward. These *men* would have been familiar with the stories of Joshua and their ancestor's conquest of the land by the hand of *God*. However, it seems the *men of Israel* had forgotten how mighty their *God* is. By forgetting this fact and concentrating on their current predicament they were promoting *fear* within themselves and others. The *men* were, however, making a reasonable assessment that if they went toe-to-toe with *Goliath* their prospect of victory would only occur through some miraculous means. But *David* will not go toe-to-toe; he will fight *Goliath* on his own terms.

David had complete trust in his *God* and said to the men who were standing by him, "What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should taunt the armies of the living God?" *David* here displays a great boldness that is rooted in his faith that *God* will fight for *Israel*. But he also asks what reward he can expect for volunteering to be the *champion*.

The people answered him in accord with this word, saying,

"Thus it will be done for the man who kills him."

The people answer and recite all the rewards *Saul* has offered to the man who slays *Goliath*. *David* has total confidence in *God*. But he is also interested in the reward. And he likely has already seen an opening to confront *Goliath* on his own terms, where the advantage flips to him.

Perhaps *David's* strong faith and courage is why the prophet *Samuel* said,

"The LORD has sought out for Himself a man after His own heart, and the LORD has appointed him (*David*) as ruler over His people."
(1 Samuel 13:14)

Eliab the oldest brother was offended by *David's* attitude of faith and courage, seeing that he and the rest of the *men of Israel* had an attitude of fear and cowardice. Verse 28 says that *Eliab's* anger burned against *David* and he said, "Why have you come down? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness?" *Eliab* is inferring that *David* is irresponsible to have left his duty at home, tending his *sheep*. He is clearly attempting to put *David* in his place (from his perspective).

Eliab, continues with his berating of *David*, saying, "I know your insolence and the wickedness of your heart; for you have come down in order to see the battle." *Eliab* contends that not only is *David* being irresponsible for leaving the *sheep*, but he is also insolent and wicked for shirking his responsibility to gain entertainment from coming to see the battle.

Sibling rivalry can be bitterly intense, especially when the older is outdone by the younger. *Eliab* is clearly reacting in his flesh, his sinful nature. Out of all the fruit of the flesh the Apostle *Paul* describes in Galatians 5:19-21, we see *Eliab* portray enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, and envying.

David takes the high road and replies, "What have I done now? Was it not just a question?" David was wise not to engage his oldest brother or even defend himself against Eliab's accusations made in anger. David simply turned away from him to another and said the same thing; and the people answered the same thing as before.

In doing this, *David* shows the heart of *God*, since Jesus instructed His followers to "turn the other cheek" when someone strikes us (Matthew 5:39). The practical application of this is often simply to avoid reacting and retaliating. This is just what *David* did. To behave this way is actually being shrewd. In fact, Romans 12:20 tells us that by loving our enemies we heap coals of fire on their heads.

Biblical text:

²⁰ So David arose early in the morning and left the flock with a keeper and took *the supplies* and went as Jesse had commanded him. And he came to the circle of the camp while the army was going out in battle array shouting the war cry. ²¹ Israel and the Philistines drew up in battle array, army against army. ²² Then David left his baggage in the care of the baggage keeper, and ran to the battle line and entered in order to greet his brothers. ²³ As he was talking with them, behold, the champion, the Philistine from Gath named Goliath, was coming up from the army of the Philistines, and he spoke these same words; and David heard *them*. ²⁴ When all the men of Israel saw the man, they fled from him and were greatly afraid. ²⁵ The men of Israel said, "Have you seen this man who is coming up? Surely he is coming up to defy Israel. And it will be that the king will enrich the man who kills him with great riches and will give him his daughter and make his father's house free in Israel." ²⁶ Then David spoke to the men who were standing by him, saying, "What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should taunt the armies of the living God?" ²⁷ The people answered him in accord with this word, saying, "Thus it will be done for the man who kills him." ²⁸ Now Eliab his oldest brother heard when he spoke to the men; and Eliab's anger burned against David and he said, "Why have you come down? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your insolence and the wickedness of your heart; for you have come down in order to see the battle." ²⁹ But David said, "What have I done now? Was it not just a question?" ³⁰ Then he turned away from him to another and said the same thing; and the people answered the same thing as before.