

# 1 Samuel 17:31-39

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/1sam/1sam-17/1-samuel-1731-39/>

*David volunteers to fight Goliath, recalling his faith in the God of Israel and the skills he acquired protecting his father's sheep. He assures King Saul that God will deliver him from Goliath as well.*

*David spoke words of faith and courage which stood out from among all the words of fear and cowardice spoken by the men of Israel. David's words brought encouragement and hope to those who heard them and were ultimately told to Saul, so he sent for David.*

*David continued with words of strength and courage in the presence of Saul and said, "Let no man's heart fail on account of Goliath; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine." Saul, doubtful, replied, "You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for you are but a youth while he has been a warrior from his youth."*

In 1 Samuel 16:18, one of Saul's servants described David as "a mighty man of valor, and a warrior" indicating that David might have been young but was also powerful. Saul would have been familiar with David, as Saul had made David an armor bearer (1 Samuel 16:21). It could be that Saul already knew of David's capabilities as a slinger.

*David answers by testifying of God's faithfulness to him in giving him the skills to kill a lion and a bear:*

*"Your servant was tending his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and took a lamb from the flock, I went out after him and attacked him, and rescued it from his mouth; and when he rose up against me, I seized him by his beard and struck him and killed him. Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, since he has taunted the armies of the living God."*

*David would have tended his father's sheep in the pastures near Bethlehem, and in the Judean wilderness. While tending the sheep, he had occasion to encounter both a lion as well as a bear. These predators were after an easy meal, and took a lamb from the flock. When this occurred, David chased them. He went out after him and attacked him. We can infer from what is about to transpire that David attacked both the lion and the bear with his sling. In each case, he likely would have to had hit them with a shot in the head in order to subdue them. It is possible that David is presenting an image of hitting the lion in the head with a sling shot, knocking him senseless, then grabbing the lion by his beard and cutting his throat while he is still stunned. Similar to the fate he imagines for Goliath.*

*David continues and declares it was God who granted him victory over the lion and the bear. "The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine." Both in David's words and deeds we can see*

evidence of what was stated of *David* in the prior chapter, that the “Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon *David*” from the moment *David* was anointed by Samuel.

*David* is quite confident. It is in large part because of his faith in *God*, and *God*’s spirit upon him. But it is also due to his preparation and experience. *David* had great confidence in his ability with the sling. He did not fight the *bear or the lion* on their terms. And neither would he fight Goliath on his terms. To a skilled slinger, Goliath was an oversized, stationary target.

*Saul* being encouraged by *David*’s spirit of faith and courage, as well as his testimony of victory over the *lion and the bear*, said to him, “Go, and may the LORD be with you.” Faith and courage are attractive and contagious attributes to those who witness them. Hebrews 11 spends an entire chapter commemorating people of tremendous faith and courage.

Then *Saul* attempted to clothe *David* with his garments and a bronze helmet on his head and other Israelite armor. *David* girded *Saul*’s sword over his armor and tried to walk, for he had not tested them. Perhaps out of respect for *Saul*, *David* tried on the armor he offered. Since *Saul* was a head taller than most (1 Samuel 9:2), and *David* was able to put it on, it tells us *David* was full grown. *David* girded his sword over his armor and tried to walk. *David* likely had in mind that his primary advantage was mobility. He would be mobile, while Goliath would be virtually stationary, and *David* would maneuver to get a good angle so he could knock down Goliath with his stone. Accordingly, *David* declined the armor.

So *David* said to *Saul*, “I cannot go with these, for I have not tested them.” By this *David* means “I am not used to them.” And *David* took them off. *David* had a plan; it was mobility and accuracy verses armor and brute strength. The armor did not fit the plan. So *David* left them behind. *Saul* does not object. *David*’s plan was thinking out of the box. Goliath did not specify that the combat had to be done a certain way (although he will soon try to shift the terms). In an ancient sort of way, *David* has proposed to “take a gun to a knife fight.” He is going to have a long-distance weapon against a big target with a sword, spear, and javelin. *Saul* must have decided, “You know, this just might work” because he gave approval to the plan.

In ancient times, slinging was an accepted method of warfare. *David* had apparently convinced *Saul* that he was an expert. We are not told that *Saul* asked for a demonstration. The Lord moved on his heart to give *David* his approval.

## **Biblical Text**

<sup>31</sup> When the words which *David* spoke were heard, they told *them* to *Saul*, and he sent for him. <sup>32</sup> *David* said to *Saul*, “Let no man’s heart fail on account of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine.” <sup>33</sup> Then *Saul* said to *David*, “You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for you are *but* a youth while he has been a warrior from his youth.” <sup>34</sup> But *David* said to *Saul*, “Your servant was tending his father’s sheep. When a lion or a bear came and took a lamb from the flock, <sup>35</sup> I went out after him and attacked him, and rescued *it* from his mouth; and when he rose up against me, I seized *him* by his beard and struck him and killed him. <sup>36</sup> Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, since he has taunted the armies

of the living God.”<sup>37</sup> And David said, “The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.” And Saul said to David, “Go, and may the LORD be with you.”<sup>38</sup> Then Saul clothed David with his garments and put a bronze helmet on his head, and he clothed him with armor.<sup>39</sup> David girded his sword over his armor and tried to walk, for he had not tested *them*. So David said to Saul, “I cannot go with these, for I have not tested *them*.” And David took them off.