23-29 June 2024 Confident in God and ready for anything?

# **1 Samuel 17:32-49**

# **New International Version**

**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 lionand 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.”

**38**Then Saul dressed David in his own tunic. He put a coat of armor on him and a bronze helmet on his head. **39**David fastened on his sword over the tunic and tried walking around, because he was not used to them.

“I cannot go in these,” he said to Saul, “because I am not used to them.” So he took them off. **40**Then he took his staff in his hand, chose five smooth stones from the stream, put them in the pouch of his shepherd’s bag and, with his sling in his hand, approached the Philistine.

**41**Meanwhile, the Philistine, with his shield bearer in front of him, kept coming closer to David. **42**He looked David over and saw that he was little more than a boy, glowing with health and handsome, and he despised him. **43**He said to David, “Am I a dog, that you come at me with sticks?” And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. **44**“Come here,” he said, “and I’ll give your flesh to the birds and the wild animals!”

**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. **46**This day the Lord will deliver you into my hands, and I’ll strike you down and cut off your head. This very day I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds and the wild animals, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. **47**All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord’s, and he will give all of you into our hands.”

**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.

**Bible notes**The confrontation between David and Goliath was about more than size. Alongside of his extraordinary height, Goliath wore thick bronze armour and carried a spear tipped with the latest technology, iron. This import from the Aegean civilisation further west gave him a huge advantage over the Israelites, whose weapons were made of softer bronze. All this weaponry misled Goliath into putting his trust in physical resources, whereas David’s trust was in God.

The story contrasts Goliath’s ferocity with David’s inner strength. It differentiates David from his soldier brothers – he was sent only to provide them with supplies, not to fight (vv.17-18) – and emphasises that he was only a boy. Unlike the demoralised Israelite army, David was not overwhelmed by Goliath’s appearance. His confidence earned a rebuke from his oldest brother, recalling Joseph’s similar fraught relationship with his siblings. When Saul heard of him, he also took David’s words as empty bluster (v.33).

David’s reply to Saul demonstrates his physical courage – he had confronted lions and bears, a comparison that dehumanises Goliath. More importantly, he had learnt that real power flows from dependence on God’s strength and power to save. So, Saul, perhaps short on options for countering the fear Goliath was causing in his troops, was persuaded to risk his whole army (v.9) on a single combat between David and Goliath. However, Saul was not prepared to put his whole trust in God to defend David and Israel. The impractical suggestion that David should borrow his armour (v.38) shows that Saul was still focusing on human resources to overcome the enemy.

The combat began with the exchange of taunts. It is ironic that Goliath, whom David compared to lions and bears, likened himself to a stray dog. His threats against David depended on his false gods; in reply, David confidently asserted the power of Israel’s God to destroy the enemy. They envisioned very different outcomes. Goliath spoke only of David’s death and destruction (v.44). David foretold the loss of the whole Philistine army as a worldwide witness to the power of Israel’s God. His attack with the slingshot amplified how God’s power works: agile, audacious and precisely focused to achieve God’s purposes.

### ****Reflection****

Spend a few moments thinking about what stands out for you from the Bible reading. This idea may help.

Have you ever tried helping an impatient child – or even an adult – to learn a new skill or technique when they are keen to do it themselves immediately: ‘Let me do it!’? So, you let them get on with it, knowing that they will almost certainly need to come back to you for help. If we’re honest, some of us are the same with printed instructions: we are over-confident about our ability to assemble the flat-pack furniture unaided, but eventually our frustration drives us back to the page. In today’s Gospel story, the disciples don’t call on Jesus until they’ve tried everything and are desperate. Are we also like this?

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**Questions for reflection**

*You may wish to use these questions and the picture to help you think about or discuss issues arising from this week’s Bible passage.*

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**Questions**

* Is your faith something to shout about, or something you’d prefer to hide?
* What can we learn from David’s confidence?
* How might you step out in faith this week?

## Prayer

Adapt to your local context.

‘Who is on the Lord’s side, who will serve the king?’
David made careful provision for his flock and belongings;
as a boy he went out in your name and became a man of God.
We praise you that he was on the Lord’s side, he served the king.
He shows us that we too can step up to the mark,
put our total trust in you and sally forth in your name.
‘We are on the Lord’s side,
Saviour we are thine.’
**Amen.**

 **A prayer to end the Bible study**

Great, powerful God, help us to trust you with the big things;
(throw arms out wide)
Great, loving God, help us to trust you with the little things;
(make a small shape with your fingers)
All-knowing God, help us to trust you with everything, always.
(make a large circle with your arms)
**Amen.**