

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian
Church, 10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic.,
3166]

**DHW BIBLE CLASS
LESSON 12**

**FIRST SAMUEL
CHAPTER 17**

INTRODUCTION

In chapter 16, David, who was then a teenager, was introduced to Saul as one who could relieve him whenever he suffer from his depressive attacks. In this chapter, we read the account of how David defeated the Philistines' giant Goliath. This was the introduction of David to the nation of Israel and more importantly to king Saul as well.

This account is well known to both adults and children. Interesting and captivating as it may be, there are many precious lessons for our Christian living. These lessons include true courage; true victory; and spiritual warfare.

There are many "Goliaths" in our lives and they can be debilitating and devastating. What or who is the "Goliath" in your life? How can you overcome it or him? The answers can be found in this chapter.

COMMENTARY

**Goliath Defies the Israelites
—vv. 1-11**

The Philistines gathered at the valley of Elah on the northern hillside between Shocoh and Azekah to battle against the Israelites. The Israelites arrayed themselves on the

southern hillside of the valley. Many years had passed since the Philistines were defeated at Michmash. It looked like the Philistines wanted to avenge their defeat. They brought their champion Goliath ("splendour"). Goliath came from Gath, the Philistine city which was situated a little further to the west of the valley. Gath was the city where some of the last Anakims had settled.¹ Goliath stood six cubits and a span, which was about nine feet and nine inches tall.² He wore a helmet of brass and a brass coat of mail which weighed about 5,000 shekels (about 125 pounds or 56.8 kilograms). He had brass "greaves" or shin guards on his legs and a brass "target" or javelin or spear strung across his back. The staff of the spear had loops attached to it and the sharp head of the spear weighed 600 shekels (about 15 pounds or 6.8 kilograms). He also carried a large rectangular shield for maximum protection. The fact that his armour was described in detail showed how intimidating and formidable an enemy he was. He was the Philistines' champion or "Hulk". He had on the best armament money could buy for maximum protection and defence. He was

¹Deuteronomy 9:2 A people great and tall, the children of the Anakims, whom thou knowest, and *of whom* thou hast heard say, Who can stand before the children of Anak!

Joshua 11:21 And at that time came Joshua, and cut off the Anakims from the mountains, from Hebron, from Debir, from Anab, and from all the mountains of Judah, and from all the mountains of Israel: Joshua destroyed them utterly with their cities. 22 There was none of the Anakims left in the land of the children of Israel: only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod, there remained.

² One cubit is about 18 inches and a span is half a cubit i.e. 9 inches.

invincible as far as the Philistines were concerned.

Goliath provoked the armies of Israel each morning and evening. He boasted that he was the champion of the Philistines. He ridiculed the Israelites as slaves of Saul. He challenged the Israelites to choose a man to fight against him in a single combat to settle the outcome of the war—the winner would take all. If Goliath won, the Israelites would all become the slaves of the Philistines and serve them. The Israelites were the people of God whom God had chosen to serve Him. So what was at stake was the sovereignty of the LORD God of Israel. Saul and all his warriors were very terrified, disheartened and worried. And for 40 days, Goliath taunted and terrified Saul and his armies. **1 Samuel 17:10**, *“And the Philistine said, I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together.”*

David Takes Up the Challenge —vv. 12-30

Meanwhile David (“beloved”) was tending his father’s sheep. Some years ago, he had been anointed by Samuel to be the next king of Israel. Then he was sent to play the harp before Saul in order to soothe his mental depression and malady. Although Saul made him his armour bearer, he was too young to serve in the army. He returned home to continue his work as a shepherd. David had seven other brothers and three of them were serving as soldiers in Saul’s army. They were Eliab (“my God is father”), David’s eldest brother, then Abinadab (“my father is noble”) and Shammah (“astonishment”), his second and third brothers respectively. Jesse, their father, was patriotic for he sent three of his sons to serve the country

in time of need. And David had been shuttling between Saul’s camp and his home to bring food to his brothers.

On a particular day (40 days after Goliath had been taunting Israel), Jesse told David to deliver some corn, bread and cheese to his brothers and their captain in the camp. He also told David to report to him how his brothers were doing and also the latest news about the war situation. David obediently carried out his father’s instructions. He rose early in the morning. Before he went, he assigned someone to look after the sheep so that they would not be left unattended. David was a very responsible young man. He knew he was serving God and not man. Giving his best was the minimum that he expected of himself when doing God’s work.

David arrived at the camp. The Israelites and Philistines were lining up their armies for battle. David left his “carriage” (his supplies which he carried) with the quartermaster (the officer responsible for providing food, clothing and equipment). He then went to greet his brothers. As he was talking to his brothers, Goliath came out of his camp and taunted and challenged Israel to choose one man to fight him in a single combat. When the Israelite soldiers heard and saw Goliath, they were terrified.

David heard Goliath’s taunts. The men of Israel informed David that king Saul would enrich any Israelite soldier and give him the hand of his daughter if he could kill the Philistines’ “Hulk”. Moreover, his family would be given “free” status. This meant that his family would not have to serve in the king’s court.

David was incensed when he heard the boast of Goliath. He remarked: “Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?” As far as David was concerned, Goliath was not only insulting Israel but Israel’s God. What therefore was at stake was the sovereignty of the living God whom the uncircumcised Goliath did not know.

In answer to his question, the people told David of the threefold reward that the man would receive from the king. Eliab, his eldest brother, heard what David had just said. He was very angry with David and chided him. He scolded David for leaving the sheep without any care. In this regard, he was mistaken and unjust in his accusation for he did not ask David first before charging him. He further charged David for being proud and mischievous and accused him of pretending to send food to them while secretly wanting to see the fighting. While Eliab’s resentment and reproach of David was understandable, he should have taken the trouble to find out the truth first. Could this reaction from an older brother be due to the fact that God had anointed David and not him? However, David promptly answered Eliab: “What have I done? Is there not a cause?” David turned to the other soldiers and repeated his words. They gave him the same answer about the reward that the man would receive if he could kill Goliath. David’s remarks to the soldiers seemed to indicate to the men that he was interested in fighting Goliath. David’s words were reported to king Saul who sent for him.

David Slays Goliath—vv. 31-54

When David was presented before Saul, he boldly assured the king that he was willing to fight Goliath being confident that he could win the combat and that no one should be sad and down-hearted because of the “Hulk” (v.32). Saul was not impressed. Remember that if Israel lost the fight, the whole nation would be plunged into captivity and slavery. Saul was sceptical that David could match Goliath let alone win the battle.

Saul remarked that David was only a youth and Goliath a trained warrior. David then shared his past experience as a shepherd tending his father’s sheep. He had killed a lion and a bear when they tried to eat one of his sheep. David again assured Saul that Goliath would be killed like the lion and the bear as he had defied the armies of the living God. David continued and testified that the LORD who delivered him out of the paw of the lion and the bear would also deliver him from Goliath (v.36). Hearing this, Saul allowed him to fight Goliath and pronounced that the LORD be with him (v.37).

Saul armed David with his own armour and put on him a helmet of brass and a coat of mail for protection. However, David found the armour too cumbersome, limiting his agility. He told Saul that he could not fight Goliath with the armour because he had not practised with it. So he took the armour off. Then he took his shepherd crook and chose five smooth stones out of a stream in the valley. He put the five smooth stones in his shepherd’s bag and with his sling, he approached Goliath, who drew near to David. At first, Goliath “looked about” obviously expecting to see a man of his stature

but he saw only David. He despised David and looked at him with contempt because he was a young lad, ruddy and fair-skinned. Goliath sneered at David, saying, "Am I a dog that you should come to me with sticks?" He then cursed David in the name of his gods. Goliath felt that it was a great insult to fight David. He had challenged Israel to a duel to the death and Israel had sent a mere helpless young boy.

Goliath boasted that he would kill and feed David to the birds and the animals. David then responded to Goliath saying (vv. 45-47): *Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the LORD'S, and he will give you into our hands.*" This was the secret to spiritual victory and success.

When the battle began, David ran towards the Philistines' camp. At the same time, he took a stone, placed it in his sling, slung it and the stone struck Goliath on his forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and slew Goliath. Goliath fell down on his face to the earth. David ran towards the fallen Goliath, he took Goliath's sword and cut his head off. When the Philistines saw that their great champion was slain, they ran

away. They did not keep their side of the bargain to be the slaves of Israel. The armies of Israel and those of Judah rose up, shouted war cries and pursued the Philistines to their cities of Gath and Ekron. The Israelites then returned to their camps. They took for booty the things in the Philistines' camps. In the meantime, David dismantled Goliath's armour. He took the head to Jerusalem and the armour to his tent.

David was Introduced to Saul a Second Time—vv. 55-58

Saul watched David when the latter went to combat against Goliath. He asked Abner, his military commander, whose son David was. Abner could not tell the king because he did not know David. Saul then instructed Abner to find out about David. When David returned from defeating Goliath, Abner brought him before Saul. David had the head of Goliath in his hand. Saul asked him concerning his father. David answered that he was the son of Jesse, the Bethlehemite. It seemed strange that Saul did not know David because he had been delighted with David's musical talent and had requested that he be his armour bearer (16:21-23). When David was first introduced to Saul, he was a very young teenager, probably about 12 years old. After the first introduction, he returned to his home to tend to his father's sheep. Several years had passed. David by now had grown up. His physique had changed and he had grown a beard. It was not possible for Saul to recognize the young lad who had been introduced to him before. Or it could be that when David was a mere musician, he was no threat. Now David had become a renowned champion of Israel. Surely king Saul had not

forgotten what Samuel had said about the man who would replace him.

PRACTICAL VALUE

As we look to the Lord for spiritual lessons when reading and studying this chapter, we cannot fail but notice God's unseen hand working in the affairs of men. Nothing happens by chance to God's children who are called according to His purpose. David's appearance at the Israeli camp just when Goliath taunted the Israelites and bellowed his challenge was not accidental or a coincidence. God allowed Goliath to boast and ridicule Israel His people for 40 days, not a day more or less.

It does seem that the number "40" is significant. Many instances in the experiences of the people of God happened with the number "40". For instance, the Israelites wandered in the wilderness of Sinai for 40 years before they claimed the Promised Land.³ Joshua was 40 years old when Moses sent him to spy on the land of Canaan with 11 others.⁴ The Lord Jesus Christ was tempted by Satan in the wilderness for 40 days.⁵

³Deuteronomy 8:2 And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no.

⁴Joshua 14:7 Forty years old was I when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadeshbarnea to espy out the land; and I brought him word again as *it was* in mine heart.

⁵Mark 1:13 And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him.

Not wanting to appear superstitious, the number "40" seemed to be a good number to convey the idea of "enough is enough." What do you think of this interpretation of the number 40?

So Goliath was not given another day more to taunt the people of God. The time was up and the punishment for his arrogance and defiance had reached its fullness. God decides on the timing. At the same time, it was an opportunity that put David another step closer to the kingship. The privilege of defeating Goliath was reserved for David. He was God's man of the hour.

In this encounter with Goliath, David showed undoubtedly that he was a man after God's own heart. He loved God and acknowledged Him in all his great exploits and experiences. He attributed his ability to overcome the lion and the bear to the LORD. He did not boast of his own ability and courage. With these two past experiences of God's deliverance in his life, he had the confidence and courage to challenge Goliath. His confidence was not in himself but in God alone.

He did not see the armies of Israel merely as the armies of men. He saw them as the armies of the LORD God. And Goliath's challenge was against God and not Israel alone. God's sovereignty and name was at stake. David felt for the LORD. He loved the LORD. And those who taunt and defy God must face the consequences. He had learnt to depend and trust in God. He did not see that Saul's splendid armour was going to help him win the battle against Goliath. He used his sling and picked five smooth stones as his weapon. They were meagre but when God was on his

side, they became the most powerful and lethal weapons as Goliath soon found out. David knew that God was on his side and he had nothing to fear. His battle cry was that he confronted Goliath in “the Name of the LORD of hosts” (v.45).

David learned to see beyond the surface and the physical. Eliab, Saul and Goliath were all guilty of looking only at the outward appearance. Eliab chided him for being mischievous by coming to the battle front. Saul saw him as only an untrained youth and thought his armour might help to protect him. Goliath despised him because he was only a youth. Many today are guilty of the same attitude— beholden to men of great worldly power, wealth and social standing. Saul saw only David’s youth and inexperience. He tried to help with earthly equipment to fight a spiritual warfare.

David said that when he had defeated Goliath, “all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel” (v.46). Once again, David gave God all the honour and glory. His theology was sound. If God was with him, he would be able to defeat his “Goliaths”. He put his confidence and trust in God. Someone who is close to the Lord and who has experienced His blessings in the past will know how to place his confidence in God. David demonstrated this. He acknowledged his own weakness when he faced the lion and the bear. But he had the victory. He testified that it was God’s enabling. When faced with Goliath, he exercised the same confidence and trust even against great odds. This is a most valuable and timely lesson for a world of compromise and deception.

AMEN.

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

Monday: 1 Samuel 17:1-11; Isaiah 13:11; 2 Peter 2:9-10.

Tuesday: 1 Samuel 17:12 -19; Ephesians 6:1-3; Luke 2:48-52.

Wednesday: 1 Samuel 17:20-31; Isaiah 59:19.

Thursday: 1 Samuel 17:32-47; Psalm 27:13; Matthew 26:51-54.

Friday: 1 Samuel 17:48-58; Psalm 33:16; 1 Corinthians 1:23-31.

Analysis:

Text	Practical Value
1 Samuel 17:1-11	
1 Samuel 17:12-19	
1 Samuel 17:20-31	
1 Samuel 17:32-47	
1 Samuel 17:48-58	

Discussion Questions

1. Why were king Saul and his men so afraid of Goliath whereas David was not?

2. They were brought up in the same household by the same parents and probably with the same godly influence and yet the older brothers were afraid whereas David was not. How does one explain this phenomenon?

3. How did David view the war between the Philistines with their prize warrior Goliath and the armies of Israel? What does it tell us about him? What do you think of Eliab's judgement?

4. What was the source of David's courage and confidence? Why was David able to see the "cause" while the rest could not? Is there a similar cause today?

5. Do you have the same kind of courage as David? Can you think of a modern day example in your life where such courage is needed?

6. List at least two practical lessons that you have learnt in this chapter.
