

1 Samuel 17

December 9, 2020

We read in 1 Samuel 16:4 that Saul has amassed a substantial army of 210,000 men. It's no wonder that the Philistines want to decide the victor by "representative combat" instead of risking a full scale clash. So they send out their champion, Goliath, who openly taunts "the ranks of Israel" (v. 10). And those ranks cower before him.

When David arrives at the camp he sees the true situation: Goliath is defying not the children of Israel but the Lord himself. David calls the Israelite force "the armies of the living God." He is indignant against Goliath because he is uncircumcised, not bearing the mark of belonging to God. As Psalm 2:2 says, "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his Anointed." Goliath is like those kings and rulers.

In Psalm 51 we have David's famous confession to the Lord. "Against you, you only, have I sinned." Despite his breathtaking treachery against Uriah, the husband of

Bathsheba, David understands that this sin and all sins are an offense against God. In legal terms, God is a party to every matter.

Do we recognize that those who appear to oppose us personally are actually defying God and say, like David, "the battle is the Lord's"? Do we see our offenses as being against God, even those that are unknown to other people, or of little importance to them?

Notes

17:1 The site of this battle is the Elah Valley between Sokoh and Azekah, about 17 miles west of Jerusalem in the direction of Philistia. A stream runs down the valley in the winter, full of round, smooth stones.

17:4-7 Goliath stood about 9 feet tall. His mail coat weighed 120 pounds and the tip of his spear 15 pounds.

17:40 The sling was not just a weapon for children or shepherds but, according to 2 Chron. 26:14, could be carried by professional soldiers.

Questions for study and discussion:

1. According to verse 8, who does Goliath see as his enemy? Who is he actually defying?
2. What do we learn about faith from David in this chapter? What are lessons for us?
3. A very mundane errand brings David to the army encampment. How does he get from being a cheese delivery boy to champion of Israel? Are there any lessons for us?

4. In verse 26, David uses the common phrase “the living God.” What does the word “living” mean here? How does it affect how we see God?
5. See verse 28. Are we like Eliab sometimes?
6. In verse 46 David promises disaster not only for Goliath but the rest of the Philistine army. Does this come true?
7. David’s words when he first arrives at the camp have little effect on the Israelites. But in verse 52 they throw themselves into the battle. Why? Is there a lesson for us?
8. Saul’s question in verse 58 presents a difficulty in light of his previous acquaintance with David. How can this difficulty be resolved?