David's Royal Interest

1 Samuel 17:55-58

September 13, 2026

Chapter 17 of 1 Samuel. I'm going to just run through our outline points quickly, that we've covered and we'll pick it back up. Kind of, we'll finish a couple thoughts I had on the last point we were still in last week and I'm not going to read the whole chapter up front, I'll just read the verses as I get there on the last couple points. But just to remind you of our outline points, the setting, Israel, if you had read up to this point, Saul, there's enemies all around. Saul has an army and he's defending the country.

It's a typical position; an enemy has come up against them. But very quickly, they realize it's not so typical and Goliath presents himself as the major problem for Israel, the giant problem that they did not expect and that's the antagonist. In point three was the protagonist, where David is revealed after chapter 16. He's seen from that chapter as a musician of Saul to

drive away the evil spirit. And we see him again here, watching over his flock and his father sends him.

He's just, you know, he's described, as Saul, as a youth. I mean, we might think of as a teenager. And he's not even a big in stature teenager. He's small, but he is the one introduced and we find out he is the solution that Israel needed. But then we see in point four, the contagonist, David's brother, supposed to be on his side, but railing against him, accusing him of an evil heart. And David, he's asking all around Israel, basically trying to provoke someone to care about God's glory more than their own self-interest.

And in asking around, David finds out that there's no one else there who cares about God's glory more than their own life. And so point five is the enlistment. David enlists into Saul's army, where we see a contrast between Saul and David. David has an unfailing courage, because of his divine confidence, while Saul has all of his confidences in the flesh. He tries to discourage David from going out to battle. And when he can't dissuade David, he insists that David put on all of his armor.

But David realizes that, one, it's not going to work and two, that would bring too much glory to himself. He wants to bring all the glory to God. So he goes out to battle with

unprotected faith. And that's where we see in verse or point six, the battle, where we see Israel's almighty power in verses 41 to 54. And we talked about Goliath and David. They each have a bit of a speech. Goliath has a proud reproach that he brings against Israel and David a godly rebuke.

And then the point we were in last time was a long-shot redemption. That's where I'll reread those verses here in, we'll, back up to 47, just to the end of David's rebuke, because that kind of ties into what we're going to, something we're going to mention tonight. So David's in the middle of his speech, and he says, backing up into verse 46, that all the Philistines and all the earth might know through his victory that there is a God in Israel. And he says in verse 47, "'and this assembly," that is the Philistines and the Israelites, "may know that Yahweh does not save by sword or by spear, for the battle is Yahweh's, and he will give you into our hands.'

"Then it happened when the Philistine rose and came and drew near to meet David, that David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine. David sent his hand down into his bag, took from it a stone, and slung it and struck the Philistine on his forehead. And the stone sank into his forehead so that he fell on his face to the ground."

So these two verses in particular, 48 and 49, they focus on the human agency of the battle. The young David, without any modern metal weapons, he runs into the battlefield with, towards Goliath, the Philistine, with courage and confidence, and really the the courage and confidence of a veteran warrior. And within seconds, just a matter of seconds, he has brought this giant that everybody else thought was invincible, he brought him to a grinding halt with his face on the ground.

And if we miss, I mentioned this last time, but if we miss the connection between Goliath with his face on the ground, and then the the allusion to 1 Samuel chapter 5, where the Philistine god Dagon, God laid on his face to the ground twice, the author wants to make sure that we don't miss the divine element in all of this. If we miss the allusion to 1 Samuel chapter 5, we don't want to miss, he makes sure, the author makes sure we don't miss the divine element.

And that brings us to another sub-point in this section, a divine intervention. That's what we find in verse 50 and beyond, "Thus David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, and he struck the Philistine and put him to death. But there was no sword in David's hand."

As you read this verse in English, as it says, "Thus David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone," as you read that sentence in English, it sounds as if the emphasis is on which weapons David used to prevail over Goliath. I think you can get to the right conclusion in the English translation, but it's much clearer in the Hebrew, and that is that the point is not the weapon, but where David's strength lies.

If I asked you who was stronger, David or Goliath, if you read it in Hebrew, that word translated, as prevailed, is a word that means to be strong. And there's also a comparative preposition here in Hebrew, the word *min,* which basically makes this a comparison of strength between these two men, David and Goliath. And in this particular grammatical construction, it means that the subject is too strong for the object. So David was too strong for Goliath with only a sling and a stone.

So the way the Hebrew author writes this, he doesn't just say that David was victorious. It doesn't just say that he prevailed over him. He's making a statement about David's strength, because it raises a question in our minds. When we read this, and it says David was too strong for Goliath with just a sling and a stone, it raises the question, the point that

the author is trying to drive us to, obviously this is nothing physical, right?

There's a puny little kid against a giant. How could this little shepherd be stronger than this Philistine who's really, his armor probably outweighed David? How could we say that David was stronger than Goliath? And then the author reminds us again at the end of verse 50, look at it, "but there was no sword in David's hand." The author is reminding us again of what was mentioned in verse 47, that Yahweh saves not by sword, and he wants to remind us that David did not have a sword.

David went out there without any modern weapons of warfare, and yet David was too strong for Goliath. But it's not because of anything in David, obviously. It points back to the divine power within David. The almighty God was the power within David that won this battle. David wanted everybody to know that, and the author wants us to see that as well, and that doesn't come through clearly in the English translation.

But what this points to, beloved, is that the almighty spirit that filled David that we see at the end of chapter 16, that same spirit that filled David is the same spirit that lives in you and I, dear believer. And we ought to all, as we read this, be confident that whatever problems we face, whatever

trials we face, whatever temptation, if all you have is a stick and a stone, you are also too strong for whatever you come up against, because of the God who resides in you.

If you tend to get discouraged or overcome by sin and temptation or the problems of life, and maybe you think you are defeated, well, dear friend, know and be reminded that this same power resides in you to defeat sin and temptation and discouragement. This is the same kind of thing Paul meant when he said, "if God is for you, who can be against you?" David was too strong for Goliath, but obviously not physically.

The spirit can put a spine of steel in you just like he did David. So don't despair, beloved, depend on him and he will not disappoint. And the rest of these verses in this section, 51 to 54, it really depicts what happens when Yahweh shows up to the battle. Look at verses 51 to 54. We'll just read those. This is what happens when God shows up.

"Then David ran and stood over the Philistine and took his sword and drew it out of his sheath and put him to death and cut off his head with it. Then the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, so they fled. But the men of Israel and Judah arose and shouted and pursued the Philistines as far as the

valley and the gates of Ekron, and the slain Philistines lay fallen all along the way to Shaaraim, even to Gath and Ekron.

"Then the sons of Israel returned from hotly pursuing the Philistines and plundered their camps. David took the Philistine's head and brought it to Jerusalem, but he put his weapons in his tent." When Yahweh shows up, just like when we read about Jonathan acting in faith against the entire Philistine army, Yahweh showed up then and he shows up here, and when Yahweh shows up, the enemy is absolutely decimated, obliterated, and all Israel is enriched with the plunder.

As we wrap up this battle scene, we have to, if we remember back maybe a couple weeks, David, he's the one that brings a godly worldview on the scene here. We have to remember, continue through, as we are in this passage, continues to have a divine perspective. As we read this, we have a divine perspective on David, as does any reader at this point.

Nobody else on the battlefield knew this. Nobody else standing there that day had any idea that David was the anointed king, except for David's brothers. Nobody knew what was in David's future, but we have a divine perspective of David right here, his character, the indication of what God is going to do through this man whose heart was after the Lord.

It leaves us with great hopes for Israel's future. Saul was a dismal king, but David, with this guy as king, what is he going to do with Israel? If David can do this with just a stick and a stone, what can he do as king with an entire army? He's obviously destined for great things, and we see very early on, even though Saul physically stands head and shoulders above David, when it comes to being a man of character and a man of faith, David stands head and shoulders over Goliath. So we wrap up that section.

Still a few verses left in the chapter, and that brings us to point seven, the postscript. And if you want to put a colon there, followed by Israel's utter perplexity, which we would have all been utterly perplexed, if we had just seen this on the battlefield. Verse 55 to 58, let's read those together.

"Now when Saul saw David going out to meet the Philistine, he said to Abner, the commander of his army, 'Abner, whose son is this young man?' And Abner said, 'By your life, O king, I do not know.' And the king said, 'You inquire whose son the youth is.' So when David returned from striking down the Philistine, Abner took him and brought him before Saul with the Philistine's head in his hand. Saul said to him, 'Whose son are you, young

man?' And David answered, 'I am the son of your servant Jesse, the Bethlehemite.'"

Saul represents, well if we go back, if we look at verse 55, it says, "Now when Saul saw David going out to meet the Philistine." So the narrator takes us back in time. The author didn't want to interrupt the story with this, so he saved it just as the postscript at the end. But Saul represents what everyone really was thinking as David is walking out on the battlefield with just a stick and a sling. Everybody was thinking, whose kid is this? Where does this kid come from?

Saul goes beyond just curiosity here about David's roots. So while David is in Saul's mind, David is marching out to his death. There is no way that David is surviving this in Saul's mind. Saul is commanding Abner to find out whose kid he is. Why? Why does Saul care? Why is Saul interested in where David comes from? And what does this maybe indicate to us about Saul? Maybe he's like, well we better figure out who we got to tell that their their son is dead, and why I let their, you know, little teenage kid into the army to go fight a giant and die.

We know from Saul's words earlier in verse 33, that Saul thinks David is as good as dead. So I think here it could be, if he's going out, in Saul's mind he's going out to die. Let me

give you the two things I think he could be thinking about. The first one is he could be wanting to know who to go inform that their son is dead. However, I think so far in the narrative up to this point, that would make Saul very compassionate and caring and loving towards some random family in Israel.

I don't think that that's Saul. I think Saul has revealed himself to be far too pragmatic and self-preserving to be thinking about David's family. The other option I think that it has to do with is David has revealed a tremendous amount of courage, even if it was utter stupidity in Saul's mind. It was still a great amount of courage, and I think Saul wants to know if David has any brothers, because he wants them in his army.

Even if David goes out there and he dies, if he gets slaughtered, he still had the courage to do it, and David would live on in people's minds as the kid who had courage to go out and fight Goliath. And if David had any brothers, they would probably rally the morale of anybody who went out to fight with them.

Hey, this is the brother of the guy who went out and had the guts to stand up to Goliath. Saul would be happy to have any other young men from David's family in his army, just to provoke everybody else to greater courage and valor. Men who would also

be willing to go out and die for Saul. Saul was happy to have young men in front of him willing to die. Even if David dies, nobody's going to forget his courage. Anybody's going to follow his brothers into battle.

So as David is marching to his certain death in Saul's mind, Saul still only cares about himself and building up his army. Go back just a couple pages to chapter 14, verse 52. This is what I think Saul is thinking about, because this is his pattern. As he's fighting again, this is in the context of fighting his enemies. It says, "now the war against the Philistines was severe all the days of Saul, and Saul would see any mighty man or any man of valor and would gather him to his staff, into his army." This is what I think Saul is thinking about here.

Again, I think it's just another major contrast between the character of Saul and the character of David. David goes out there concerned for God's glory, even over his own life. And Saul still continues to only be concerned for himself, for building up his own army so he can stay alive. Because as we've seen throughout the book of Samuel, Saul is never the one leading the charge. Jonathan is out in front. David is out in front.

Saul's always hiding in the baggage, hiding under a tree here, hiding in a tent. Just a major contrast between Saul's character and David's. Even when this kid's going out to die, he's just concerned about the future, his own future and the future of his army.

But much to Saul's surprise, and everyone else's, David wins. And so Abner brings David back before Saul. And again, in verses 57, "David returned from striking down the Philistine. Abner took him and brought him before Saul, and the Philistine's head is in his hand. And Saul said to him, 'Whose son are you, young man?' And David answered, 'I am the son of your servant Jesse, the Bethlehemite.'"

So the major questions that arise from this portion of the text have to do with how they fit historically with chapter 16. And that brings up some textual questions that will occupy the rest of our time. And I just want to mention at the outset that this is more of just going to give us greater confidence in the Word of God. Not a major lesson to learn from the text itself, but it's just going to increase our confidence in the Scripture that we have before us today.

But this raises some textual questions. And some commentators, those who approach the Bible with unbelieving eyes

and hearts of suspicion, they approach the text as if it really isn't the Word of God. There's so much liberal academia out there. They approach the text as if it's not really the Word of God. They presuppose that the text has been altered over time, changed, redacted, edited. And the question arises as to if, going back to chapter 16, if Saul loved David in chapter 16 and called him into his service there, if David is in his service playing as a musician, how does Saul not know who David is in chapter 17?

So let's just go back to chapter 16 and read that just so it's fresh in our minds, and then we'll talk about this a little bit more. Back to chapter 16, we're just going to read the latter half of that chapter, 14 to 23. This is where those with unbelieving eyes, they ask this question, how does Saul not know who David is in chapter 17 because of this? "Now, the spirit of Yahweh departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from Yahweh terrorized him.

"Saul's servants then said to him, 'Behold, now an evil spirit from God is terrorizing you. Let our Lord now speak to your servants who are before you. Let them seek a man who is a skillful musician on the harp, and it shall be that when the

evil spirit from God is on you, he shall play the harp with his hand, and you will be well.'

"So Saul said to his servants, 'Provide for me now a man who can play well and bring him to me.' Then one of the young men answered and said, 'Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse, the Bethlehemite, who is a skillful musician, a mighty man of valor, a warrior, one who is understanding in speech, and a man of fine form, and Yahweh is with him.'

"So Saul sent messengers to Jesse and said, send me your son David, who is with the flock.' And Jesse took a donkey loaded with bread and a wineskin of wine and a young goat and sent them to Saul by David his son. Then David came to Saul and stood before him, and Saul loved him greatly, and he became his armor-bearer.

"So Saul sent to Jesse, saying, 'Let David now stand before me, for he has found favor in my sight.' Thus it happened that whenever the evil spirit from God came to Saul, David would take the harp and play it with his hand, and Saul would be refreshed and be well, and the evil spirit would depart from him."

So I already mentioned unbelieving commentators. One commentator supposes that chapter 16 and chapter 17 are

basically two different stories of how David came to be known by Saul. Two different traditions, only one of which can actually be right and true, and there is a contradiction in scripture here.

That's what many liberal scholars say, and they say that this commentator supposes that the person who compiled these two accounts in the book of Samuel didn't recognize the contradiction when they put the chapters side by side. That is an absolute affront to the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture. That is a completely unbelieving answer to the question.

Obviously, that's not one we have to consider. If you consider the Bible to be the Word of God, that's not an option. But a solution that has been proposed by someone seeking to harmonize these things rather than demolish the two texts, suppose that the author of Samuel has inserted the verses of chapter 16 out of chronological order for literary purposes.

That is to say, they happened later, but he rearranged them for literary purposes, and this happens in Scripture. There's nothing that doesn't make anything untrue if the author does that. Most recently, the author possibly did this in verse 54 of

chapter 17, if you look at that, which says that David brought the head of Goliath to Jerusalem.

Whatever that means, it doesn't mean in the middle of that battle that David ran 20 miles to Jerusalem in the opposite direction of the fleeing soldiers only to bring it back with him to Saul's tent. That's probably also an insertion of what David did later with the head of Goliath. So most commentators think chapter 16 is something that actually happened later that's been inserted in the text out of chronological order.

So a question for all of you. It may be that that's what's happened here, but I want to ask you, just as good Bible-believing Christians, we've read these passages several times, uh, the last couple weeks. I want to ask you, who are prone to trust what you read, how do you make sense of these two accounts? What do you think? Is there an apparent contradiction? Is there a way to make sense of what is written here? And I've kind of dropped hints along the way the last couple weeks.

In chapter 16, if Paul's being tormented by a spirit, who knows what he knows? Who knows what he's hearing and who knows what he's remembering? The Lord's trying, you know, obviously the Lord sent a, there was a evil spirit upon Saul. Confusion. David's name is then passed around multiple times.

Why bring up David in chapter 16? Why, why these two, you know, apparent different scenarios where David is introduced to the reader? But that is the struggle with some commentators. Why then does he do this? First, whenever we come to an apparent contradiction in Scripture, there are many apparent contradictions. And when you study, you find that there really are none.

There are no contradictions in Scripture because it is the word of God breathed out. But sometimes on the surface, it seems like there could be a contradiction and we have to first reject any unbelieving solutions. Any solution that says somebody made an error here in Scripture, we have to throw that out because of our belief in the inerrancy of Scripture.

And especially when we come to, there are a whole lot of other good options besides the author of Scripture didn't know he put two contradictory chapters next to each other. That's totally absurd. So if we look at chapter 16, and I covered this when I taught through chapter 16, but it's just worth mentioning here because this trips up a lot of people that makes them think that this was a later chronological passage or a actual thing that happened later that they inserted.

Because if you look at verse 16 or chapter 16, verse 18, when one of the young men proposed David, he says, "'Behold, I've seen a son of Jesse, the Bethlehemite, who is a skillful musician,"' which is what they were seeking. But then he says, "'a mighty man of valor and a warrior.'" And many people read that and they say, well, David hasn't even, he's not even old enough to be in the army.

How can he be described as a warrior? And again, I mentioned this a couple years ago when we taught through this passage, that if this young man, note it says that it was a young man. If any young man who is here who heard that another young man had taken a lion and a bear by the beard and killed it, do you think in the mind of that young man that that would be a warrior? Absolutely.

In fact, in 2 Samuel 23, there's a list of David's mighty men and all their deeds of might. And one of the chief men on that list was there because it says he killed a lion. And so this is not an inaccurate description of David before he entered the service of Saul. Second, some people take verse 22 in chapter 16, it says, "Saul sent to Jesse saying, 'Let David now stand before me.'"

Some people take verse 22 to mean that David entered permanent service with Saul. However, that's just making too much of that word, there. In chapter 17, I mentioned this, the narrator answers this dilemma by saying that David's brothers were in the army, but David goes back and forth between Saul and shepherding his flock. And I think, and I'm not the only one who thinks this, that David, he went to Saul when Saul needed him. When the evil spirit would come upon him, he would go and minister to Saul. And I think David was sent home whenever Saul didn't need him.

And part of the reason that this was possible, that David could just go home and that he could go back and forth was because Saul's home and David's home were not actually very far apart, even for ancient travelers. Saul of Gibeah and David of Bethlehem were only between eight to ten miles apart, their homes. So if David went home because Saul was well, if the spirit came to torment Saul, a runner could be dispatched to be at David's house within an hour to an hour and a half, and David could then make his way to Saul within a few hours.

So it doesn't seem beyond reason to think if the evil spirit departed from Saul, if Saul was well for a time, I can only imagine Saul in his pride thinking, I don't need this kid

anymore. David, go home. I don't need you anymore. I'm well. I'm not, I don't need you. The spirit's gone. And oftentimes I think those proud people, they think that's the end. They're going to be good. They're not going to need that person any longer. So send David home.

The biggest hang up that people have is in, if David ministered to Saul before, ministered before him regularly, how does Saul, as they frame it, not know who David is in chapter 17? But as I mentioned, that's not an accurate, as you all see, that's not an accurate question. Saul doesn't indicate that he has no idea who David is or has no prior knowledge of David. What it just indicates is that Saul doesn't have intimate knowledge of David's family background.

And again, as I think Jesse alluded to, this isn't really a problem. David was brought in as a domestic servant. He's a musician. He's on the same level as a cook and a baker in Saul's house. Even as an armor bearer, that doesn't mean that Saul, who is the king and very preoccupied with other things, other battles, his army, even if he's in his right mind, and even if David is an armor bearer, that doesn't mean that Saul was asking David personal questions while he's in his service.

David wasn't sitting around in a living room with Saul, and Saul was not asking David questions like, so David, tell me about yourself. Tell me about your parents and your family. Where do you come from? What do you like to do? No, he was a servant. He was seen and not heard. And even if Saul wasn't a king, he was a tormented soul. And even for those who are not tormented by evil spirits, they're just tormented by their own conscience, those folks are not generally interested in other people to get to know them. They are typically preoccupied with themselves.

And Nicole mentioned this. Yes, Saul loved David, but it was only because of the service that he provided him, the comfort that David could provide. That's what Saul loved, not because Saul knew him intimately. So when we get to the end of chapter 17, and Saul asks Abner, the commander of the army, whose kid is this? Where does he come from? It's not because he never met him before. It's just that he never cared very much before now. Which in any kingdom, for any king, and some lowly servant, that is totally understandable.

All that to say, beloved, you can trust, regardless of what a bunch of people with PhDs might tell you, if you read their commentaries, you can trust what's in here as you read it.

There's no contradiction and in fact, when you look at it, you see how masterfully written it is, and put together and compiled all of the different accounts of David's life, Samuel's life, Saul's life, masterfully put together.

And I would argue that if the events of chapter 16 actually came later, it really wouldn't make any sense at all, and it would create an explicit contradiction, because look just a few verses later in chapter 18. Chapter 18 verse 2 says, "and Saul took him," that is David, "that day, and did not let him return to his father's house."

So if David, if that is taken out of chronological order, it creates a greater problem. It creates an explicit contradiction. I'm not sure how so many commentators miss that point. Saul did not let David return to his father's house after that day. That's definitive.

The events of chapter 16 could not have happened later. We have these two chapters, 16 and 17, masterfully, brilliantly compiled together. And beloved, we can just trust the plain reading of the text that we have in front of us, as I know so many of you do.

But it is important, these kinds of things are important, because those are the kind of things that when we do talk to other people, they do try to point out all the contradictions in Scripture that they know about, that they've googled, or that somebody else has talked about on YouTube; for a reason they don't have to trust the Bible.

It is good to have an answer for these things, for our own hearts, but also for apologetic reasons. But for our purposes tonight, just want you to have an even greater confidence that we can trust the plain reading of the text of God's word that we have before us. This gives us a greater confidence that we can trust what I read earlier from Paul, that "if God is for us, then who can be against us." And as Christians, this gives us great hope.

While we are most likely never going to stand before a Philistine army, or any army for that matter, there are things that come up against us in life. And we have to continue to have this perspective from David, that "if God is for us, who can be against us." If David was too strong for Goliath, with just a sling, and a stone, and a staff, how much more so can we stand with confidence against anything that the Lord puts in front of us in this life? So walk away with that confidence, beloved.

Our Heavenly Father, we are so thankful for these examples in Scripture that we have of your love for your humble servants, like David, just a little shepherd boy. The confidence he had in you, he knew his strength came from you. And we would all do well to walk through life, to have that biblical perspective every day when we wake up, that our strength is not in us, our strength is in you.

That we do not need to try to come up with all these worldly solutions to our problems. We can trust in you, just as David did. We can trust in your word, just as David did. And so just give us, as we reflect on these things, Lord, just give us a greater confidence in you, that you are our mighty God, the mighty King of the universe, who has put his Spirit within us. And that is where our strength lies, that you can put steel in our spines to stand up in any situation, in any trial, to walk in faith, as David did. We thank you, Lord, and we love you and we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.