

What is your trust in?



1 Samuel 16 & 17

Key Bible Texts

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Key Bible Verse(s)

“But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.” (1 Samuel 16:7)

“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.” (1 Samuel 17:47)

Background to the Study

Because of Saul’s disobedience, God rejected him from being king of Israel. The prophet Samuel loved Saul, and Saul’s failure to repent caused Samuel to mourn. In the original language, the word mourn meant “to mourn for the dead.” This shows how deeply Samuel was grieved. Eventually, God said that Samuel had mourned long enough. God sent Samuel to Bethlehem to the house of Jesse and told him to anoint one of Jesse’s sons to be the next king. Samuel’s home was in Ramah, and to get to Bethlehem, he had to take a road that went by Gibeah, the location of Saul’s headquarters. At the Lord’s direction, Samuel concealed his chief purpose for the trip and took a heifer to offer sacrifices as he usually did when on his duties as circuit rider. The directions for “sanctifying” as used in this text were given in the Law and included bathing and changing clothes. As the sons of Jesse came before Samuel, he may have been looking for someone with a stature similar to Saul’s, but God had already made His choice by looking at the heart. The Bible indicates that David was handsome. “Ruddy” means red. It may mean that David had red hair, or it may indicate that he was fair-skinned. Either characteristic would have been unusual among the Hebrews. In the East at that time, red hair was considered “a rare mark of beauty.” “Of a beautiful countenance” may refer to David’s eyes, indicating that they were penetrating, keen, lively, and warm. David was chosen by God because of his inner qualities, and Samuel anointed him in a simple ceremony before his brothers. This was not a public appointment. Legally, Saul continued as the king, and David respected him as God’s anointed until Saul’s death. The Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward to guide and empower him, making him strong and efficient. God helped David to behave wisely and with courage. The Spirit of the Lord departed from King Saul.

This battle between the Israelites and the Philistines took place around 1025 B.C. The Philistines were an aggressive sea people who invaded the eastern Mediterranean coast and settled in coastal Palestine about 1200

B.C. They had been Israel's principal enemy from the time of Samson. During those years, the Israelites had lost many battles and experienced major defeats at the hands of the Philistines. With their history of many victories, and with Goliath as their champion, the Philistines were confident they would be victorious this time as well. To minimize bloodshed, armies of that time would choose the strongest warriors from each side to fight against each other. At the time of this battle, David, the youngest of Jesse's eight sons, was not a warrior. This does not mean he had not shown himself to be courageous and capable of dealing with conflict. He had killed a bear and lion while caring for his father's sheep. The historical accounts in 1 Samuel are not meant to be in chronological order. This account is given here to show that God intended to use David to deliver Israel. Also, God used this event to spread the fame of David's name throughout the nation. David may have acted as Saul's armour bearer at a later date, or the title may have been honorary. Goliath was over nine feet tall. A coat of mail was made of overlapping brass plates, and Goliath's armour probably weighed about 125 to 150 pounds. Greaves were armour for the shins. The target of brass was a spear that was slung on his back. His iron spearhead weighed between fifteen and eighteen pounds. The trench in verse 20 refers to the camp or the baggage and vehicles around the edge of the camp. "The host was going forth to fight" means that Israel's army was marching out to put themselves into formation for a battle.

A TESTIMONY FROM OUR DAY

We know there are degrees of fear – it can range from anxious concern to sheer terror. Fear associated with the danger of imminent death is no doubt one of the most terrifying. My brother tells of an incident that occurred when he was in Vietnam. He was serving in a Marine Recon Battalion and had been dropped behind enemy lines. One night, his team of six people was being hunted by a regiment of the North Vietnamese army. All night they were essentially "pinned down" in a jungle thicket with enemy troops searching for them – at times within 50 feet of their location. For seven long hours, my brother was convinced that he was going to be killed. His mind agonized about dying. He visualized his funeral and thought about who would be attending it. That was terror – seven hours of terror. However, focusing on the fact that "the battle is the Lord's" can make a difference in a person's state of mind when facing death. A World War II veteran who served as a frontline infantryman testified, "I found that God was right there to take good care of anyone who would trust Him. Shrapnel came so close to me that it burned the side of my head parallel to the stem of my eyeglasses, but it never even drew blood. I crawled through muddy drainage ditches until my knees were raw, with machine gun slugs whizzing over my head, yet God brought me through it all." The Children of Israel knew about the fear of death. In today's text, King Saul and the Israelite army were on one side of the valley; the Philistine enemy was on the other. However, the two forces were not evenly matched. Facing the giant Goliath decked in his military armour, the Israelites were filled with fear. Verse 11 states they were "greatly afraid." The fact is, they were terrified! Apparently, they were facing their circumstances in their own strength, and they had been in terror for forty days. David, possibly the youngest Israelite in the valley of Elah, had a different perspective. He undoubtedly had less military experience than Saul or the Israelite army; yet David had experience that gave him confidence to overcome the fear that crippled the Israelites. He had proven that God was a match for circumstances that can cause fear; he realized that "the battle is the Lord's," and he relied on God for protection. How much easier it is to face fearful situations when we understand this principle!

A Closer Look

Question 1

What caused Samuel to believe that Eliab was the one to be king?

Question 2

The Lord commanded Samuel to anoint one of Jesse's sons to be Israel's next king (1 Samuel 16). What characteristics did Samuel use to evaluate Jesse's sons? What did the Lord use?

Question 3

What basis should we use when we evaluate people or situations?

Question 4

What statements did David make that showed his confidence in God's ability to protect him against Goliath?

Question 5

What does David's attitude and perspective tell us about his relationship with God?

Question 6

Perhaps you are facing a fear-causing event. What can you do to encourage yourself to be like David and expect deliverance from God?

Take Home

It is easy to react to what we can observe. However, it is good to remember that we can see only the surface. God can see the heart! David said, "The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this." This shows where he placed his trust. Just as David did not have fear when facing the giant, we can be shielded from fear when we face the Goliaths in our lives, by looking to the Lord for our deliverance and protection.