

## Series Slide

C.S. Lewis' classic book "The Screwtape Letters" is written from the perspective of an Older demon- "Uncle Screwtape" writing to his Demon Nephew- "Wormwood" to give advice regarding tempting humans to sin.

The book was written in Britain in 1942- right in the middle of World War 2- so it's filled, it's filled with references to the war, and the temptations that were prevalent during wartime.

Listen now- to Uncle Screwtape write about Courage.

To note: in the book, Screwtape refers to God as "The Enemy". But to avoid confusion, I've changed it to just say "God".

**"Courage is not simply *one* of the virtues, but the form of every virtue at the testing point, which means, at the point of highest reality. A chastity, or honesty, or mercy, which yields to danger will be chaste, honest, or merciful only on conditions."**

**Pilate was merciful till it became risky."**

In other words, if a virtue is compromised...it never was a virtue at all. It was just a way you acted to fit in...or be lauded as a good moral person. A virtue is not brought into reality until it is tested.

Pontius Pilate was merciful with Jesus...until being merciful meant he would lose his life or his political position. Which means he was never really merciful at all.

Courage is pushing past the point of resistance...its sacrifice to do what is right when it costs you something to do the right thing. All the other virtues depend on courage to actually be brought into reality. You have to be willing to not back down in the face of adversity.

Screwtape finishes his letter with this advice about how to keep men believing that they are courageous, without having them actually take a step that requires courage.

**"The point is to keep him feeling that he has *something*, other than [God] and courage [that God] supplies *to fall back on*, so that what was intended to be a total commitment to duty becomes honeycombed all through with little unconscious reservations."**

The demonic instruction here is to move a human's trust off of God- give a man or woman a thousand other things to depend on...that will make it impossible for them to take a risky action. Again, so that in their mind, they never follow through with doing the hard thing God has called them to do. Make them believe they need a little more certainty. A little more guarantee they will be ok. We need to wait a few years and be in

a better spot with our kids. I'm going to do what God is calling me to, but i need to make sure I have enough savings first. etc. etc.

And then he ends the letter like this.

**“For remember, the *act* of cowardice is all that matters; the emotion of fear is, in itself, no sin and, though we enjoy it, it does us no good.”**

This is so important. Screwtape is saying that possessing fear is not necessarily what stops courage. In fact, the emotion of fear must be present for something to be courageous. What these demons are interested in... is the act of cowardice expressed through a thousand little honeycombed reservations that all exist because of fear. Thats the way they want to prevent the Kingdom of God from gaining momentum in the church and world.

**Title Slide- “We are the Champions: How Jesus Gives Confidence & Courage in the Midst of Fear”- 1 Samuel 17**

Today, in our journey through the OT book of 1 Samuel, we have come to what may be the most referenced story in the whole Bible outside of Jesus. But, I want to show you today- that this story isn't actually outside of Jesus. In fact it has its deepest meaning when we understand who Jesus is and what he's done.

The story shows us what courage is...and how easy it is to fall prey to the enemy's attempt to cowardice.

So lets go to 1 Samuel 17. Today, We'll read some verses. I'll talk about them, we'll read a little more, talk a little more...and then I'll save the points all for the end.

**17:1a & 2**

**The Philistines gathered their forces for war...**

**2 Saul and the men of Israel gathered and camped in the Valley of Elah; then they lined up in battle formation to face the Philistines.**

CS Lewis wrote about courage during wartime in the Screwtape letters This is war time for Israel too. And its absolutely terrifying. In ancient warfare, armies formed shield walls and then marched toward the enemy. Fire bombs were flying, arrows, swords spears going everywhere. Your only real chance of survival was to be several rows back from the front.

After the battle, many surviving soldiers would die from an infected wound. If you were injured on the battle field - you just laid there waiting to see who would find you first. So when you hear the boots approaching- you are just laying there praying it was your team...not the enemy...who would just stab everybody who might be alive in the throat.

My point is- there's a lot to be afraid of in war...period. But a being a soldier at war in ancient times is a frightening thing.

Additionally, the Philistines were one of the most advanced military people of the day. They were the first to use bronze and iron- which makes them even scarier.

**3 The Philistines were standing on one hill, and the Israelites were standing on another hill with a ravine between them. 4 Then a champion named Goliath, from Gath, came out from the Philistine camp. He was nine feet, nine inches tall 5 and wore a bronze helmet and bronze scale armor that weighed one hundred twenty-five pounds.**

The Hebrew word translated champion is Ish Benayim. Ish means man, Benayim means Between. So literally- the man between. That's important.

He's huge- either 9'9, 9'6 or 6'9 depending on whether or not you read a scribal error into this text, but regardless- with all this armor on- a guy that big in a time where the average man was about 5' tall... even 6'9 coated in armor is ONE BIG SCARY DUDE.

Another thing to note here is this word "scale" in describing Goliath's armor. This is the only time in the OT that this word is used to describe clothing. This word is used 9 other times in the OT and every one of those times it describes the covering of an animal. In Ezekiel 29- God describes a giant snake that he will drag from the Nile river- which represented Pharaoh.

So think about it. There is the scaly snake in the Garden in Genesis 3, then there is Pharaoh who kept Israel in bondage in Egypt- and now we have another snake-like enemy of God's people- Goliath.

#### **1 Samuel 17:6-7**

**6 There was bronze armor on his shins, and a bronze javelin was slung between his shoulders. 7 His spear shaft was like a weaver's beam, and the iron point of his spear weighed fifteen pounds. In addition, a shield-bearer was walking in front of him.**

Guys, I read v 7 because it describes Goliath's spear as a "weaver's beam". Archaeologists have uncovered a war song the Philistine's used to sing when encouraging Goliath to go out into battle. It goes like this "Ohhh, Beam Weaver, I believe you can get us through the fight!"

#### **v 8-11**

**8 He stood and shouted to the Israelite battle formations, "Why do you come out to line up in battle formation? " He asked them, "Am I not a Philistine and are you not servants of Saul? Choose one of your men and have him come down against me. 9 If he wins in a fight against me and kills me, we will be your servants. But if I win against him and kill him, then you will be our servants and serve us." 10**

**Then the Philistine said, “I defy the ranks of Israel today. Send me a man so we can fight each other! ” 11 When Saul and all Israel heard these words from the Philistine, they lost their courage and were terrified.**

Remember- one of the reasons that the people loved Saul as king is because he was tall...which may just mean he Saul was 5'10 like me, if average height is 5', 5'10 is like looking at a 7 footer.

There is a kind of poetic justice happening here. Israel- against God's will- wanted a king in order to be like the other nations. So they chose a really tall guy. Then the other nations showed up...and made their brave tall king look like a frightened child.

This is what is called “Representative warfare”- One Champion- one “man between” goes out to represent an entire people. And the results of the battle were them imputed to the rest of the people. If your “man between” or champion wins- you get the spoils of battle. If your champion loses- you get a lifetime of slavery or death.

Imagine- day after day hearing this 9' giant coated in scale armor with a “beam Weaver” being sung behind him calling out “GIVE ME A MAN!”

...and then looking around the camp and seeing a bunch of wooden shields and shepherd staffs and thinking “We have no one who can match this guy- i guess we're all dead!”

*Don't Read, just mention next verse*

#### **v 17-19**

Meanwhile- remember David- the youngest of all of “Jesse's sons”- “He's been back at home while his oldest brothers are out at the battle. So Jesse wants some confirmation that his sons are ok. So he sends David with a Pizza Lunchable.

I mean he sends the commander 10 portions of cheese. Maybe he thinks the commander needs to sit for long periods of time to come up with a good military strategy. Get this man a Reader's Digest.

#### **v 20-21**

**20 So David got up early in the morning, left the flock with someone to keep it, loaded up, and set out as Jesse had charged him. He arrived at the perimeter of the camp as the army was marching out to its battle formation shouting their battle cry.**

Two things to notice here.

First- through this chapter, the author is very persistent in letting you know how consistent and faithful that David has been as a shepherd and a son. He is obeying his

father...serving right where he's been called...and doing it faithfully. In fact, before he leaves, he makes sure his duties with his sheep are covered. Just a quick thing to note, in a cultural climate we live in today with youtube and tiktok- surveys show that most kids have an ambition to be famous. Not only famous- instantly famous. Just make the right video and BAM! Bob's your uncle- everybody knows and loves you.

So, being called to simple jobs seem like a waste of time for a lot of people. But God often puts you out a pasture to be faithful with something simple, before he ever calls you to lead publicly.

There is a biblical principle at work here, be faithful over a little, and the Lord will give you more to steward for his kingdom. Instead often, people despise the pasture time... and spend their days wishing it was over so they could move onto more important things. IN so doing- you miss the very formation God is trying to do in your life to bring you to a point of leadership.

Additionally, this battle formation and battle cry bit is a little embarrassing. This is like in a football game where all the players before they take the field get together and put their arms around each other and bounce up and down to get hype for the game—- imagine a team doing that then walking back into the locker room.

Over and over and over.

#### **v 23-24**

**23 While he was speaking with them, suddenly the champion named Goliath, the Philistine from Gath, came forward from the Philistine battle line and shouted his usual words, which David heard. 24 When all the Israelite men saw Goliath, they retreated from him terrified.**

Now David hears Goliath for the first time and starts asking around- "Whats the deal with the big mean guy? Why doesn't anybody go out and give him a whoopin'?"

So David learns about this deal that Saul has made where anybody who takes this Goliath down will not have to pay taxes- and will get to marry one of Saul's daughter and will have riches and glory...etc. etc.

Then...

#### **v 28**

**28 David's oldest brother Eliab listened as he spoke to the men, and he became angry with him. "Why did you come down here? " he asked. "Who did you leave those few sheep with in the wilderness? I know your arrogance and your evil heart — you came down to see the battle! "**

Now we have the worst of a big brother. Eliab points out David's weakness- Why don't you go back to watching sheep- which remember- is the very way that God trained David in faithfulness.

Additionally- its true that often when facing a Goliath- that its the very people who are supposed to be on your side supporting you- that end up offering the most negativity and resistance.

Listen to how sure Eliab is that David's heart is evil and that he is just an arrogant little kid who doesn't know anything about battles.

#### **v 32-33**

**32 David said to Saul, "Don't let anyone be discouraged by him; your servant will go and fight this Philistine! "**

**33 But Saul replied, "You can't go fight this Philistine. You're just a youth, and he's been a warrior since he was young."**

David- fired up now says "Don't let any man be discouraged." The Hebrew word for discouraged literally means- Don't let your inner man fall. Or don't lose heart!

Saul so Saul again- points out David's weakness- He has more training at warfare than you.

So David then tells Saul about the training the Lord has been doing with him in the pasture.

#### **v 34-37**

**34 David answered Saul, "Your servant has been tending his father's sheep. Whenever a lion or a bear came and carried off a lamb from the flock, 35 I went after it, struck it down, and rescued the lamb from its mouth. If it reared up against me, I would grab it by its fur, strike it down, and kill it. 36 Your servant has killed lions and bears; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, for he has defied the armies of the living God." 37 Then David said, "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."**

David here instead of looking at the Giant in front of him, is looking at God's work in his life during the pasture time...he's looking to Gods faithfulness and strength when he wasn't on the big stage with all the pressure, and he's reading that into the present.

Note too that he talks about Goliath as the uncircumcised Phillistine. Circumcision is the sign of God's covenant people. The people that God made a promise to preserve and take into a promised land. The Philistines are literally standing in the Promised Land saying- NOPE! THIS LAND BELONGS TO US!

So in that phrase- David is leaning on the covenantal relationally promise keeping God. He is seeing that God's faithfulness in the past is a down payment on his promise keeping in the future and it has infused him with confidence and courage.

**Saul said to David, “Go, and may the Lord be with you.”**

...and David said “You’re darn right he is!”

**v 38-39**

**38 Then Saul had his own military clothes put on David. He put a bronze helmet on David’s head and had him put on armor. 39 David strapped his sword on over the military clothes and tried to walk, but he was not used to them. “I can’t walk in these,” David said to Saul, “I’m not used to them.” So David took them off.**

So now Saul is trying to help David’s weakness- “Put my armor on.” But of course- the armor doesn’t fit, because David is probably like 4’11 and Saul is 5’10. He literally says “I can’t walk in these” Your way of strength has made me weak.”

**v 40**

**40 Instead, he took his staff in his hand and chose five smooth stones from the wadi and put them in the pouch, in his shepherd’s bag. Then, with his sling in his hand, he approached the Philistine.**

So now he goes to something that can only be perceived as weak to make him strong. He just goes with some rocks and a sling to face this Giant Beam Weaver.

**v 41-42**

**41 The Philistine came closer and closer to David, with the shield-bearer in front of him. 42 When the Philistine looked and saw David, he despised him because he was just a youth, healthy and handsome. 43 He said to David, “Am I a dog that you come against me with sticks? ” Then he cursed David by his gods. 44 “Come here,” the Philistine called to David, “and I’ll give your flesh to the birds of the sky and the wild beasts! ”**

Now Goliath keys in on David’s weakness. Basically he says- “This is ridiculous- I’m Conner McGregor (famous UFC fighter) and you sent out Harry Styles to fight me?”

**v 45-47**

**45 David said to the Philistine, “You come against me with a sword, spear, and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord of Armies, the God of the ranks of Israel — you have defied him. 46 Today, the Lord will hand you over to me. Today, I’ll strike you down, remove your head, and give the corpses of the Philistine camp to the birds of the sky and the wild creatures of the earth. Then all the world will know that Israel has a God, 47 and this whole assembly will know that it is not by sword or by spear that the Lord saves, for the battle is the Lord’s. He will hand you over to us.”**

Listen to the way David has not made this personal. Its not about him. Its not about the riches and glory that Saul offers him. Rather- David is there as a representative of the

LORD. He has submitted himself to be an instrument of YHWH to carry out his promises to his people. His confidence is not in his skills or his strategic position. He is not operating in a technical attitude- "I know exactly how to sling a rock to hit this guy in just the right way". That is not where his confidence comes from.

He is operating in the Bountiful attitude that expects to receive from the LORD based on his promises. SO he says- this battle belongs to the LORD. Despite how weak I am. The Lord will use my weakness to flip this thing upside down. I'm not the champion Israel deserves, but I'm the champion they get!

Keep the change ya filthy animal!

Additionally, notice that David sees 2 audiences to the LORDs work here. One the world- all the nations that don't believe YHWH is the one true God...and "the assembly" or Israel God's people who have lost heart. They will be strengthened by this when they see YHWH keep his promise to deliver them.

While everyone else's focus has been on Goliath...their biggest problem- David's focus has been on YHWH- the God who called out a people to represent him and made promises about who they are and where they would live.

It is God's character and promise that has David thinking- "What does God want me to do in this situation?" Instead of the fear that says, "What am I capable of doing?"

Remember what Uncle Screwtape said to wormwood?

**"The point is to keep him feeling that he has *something*, other than [God] and courage [that God] supplies *to fall back on*, so that what was intended to be a total commitment to duty becomes honeycombed all through with little unconscious reservations."**

David has avoided this demonic temptation, while Israel is honeycombed through, day after day with all these unconscious reservations. They have forgotten who God is and the promises he has made.

**v48-54**

**48 When the Philistine started forward to attack him, David ran quickly to the battle line to meet the Philistine. 49 David put his hand in the bag, took out a stone, slung it, and hit the Philistine on his forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell facedown to the ground.**

**50 David defeated the Philistine with a sling and a stone. David overpowered the Philistine and killed him without having a sword. 51 David ran and stood over him. He grabbed the Philistine's sword, pulled it from its sheath, and used it to kill him. Then he cut off his head. When the Philistines saw that their hero was dead, they fled. 52 The men of Israel and Judah rallied, shouting their battle cry, and**



**chased the Philistines to the entrance of the valley and to the gates of Ekron. Philistine bodies were strewn all along the Shaaraim road to Gath and Ekron.**

**53 When the Israelites returned from the pursuit of the Philistines, they plundered their camps. 54 David took Goliath's head and brought it to Jerusalem, but he put Goliath's weapons in his own tent.**

I want to finish today, by giving you the MAIN POINT of this story- and then a couple of takeaways from that main point.

First-

### **1) Jesus is the true Champion.**

In the NT, Jesus is referred to as the Son of David. He is the true King that God sent in his weakness, born in the flesh into a poor family. He spent 30 years in the pasture- as a carpenter off the map...not on anyones radar.

Then, God called him onto the scene to deliver his people from the scaly snake- the devil himself.

All around him, His disciples and Israel wanted Jesus to put on armor and pick up a sword and lead a bloody revolution against the Romans, but Jesus was fighting a bigger battle than Caesar.

He was not just a champion for Israel in the first century- he would be the man between our sin and the sin of the whole world.

While we stood on the sidelines like cowards, Jesus lived the life we were supposed to live. Then he died for our sin. In a move that looked like complete weakness- he was actually saving us.

And, just like Davids brother Eliab falsely accused him of ill motives and cursed him, so Jesus closest friends and all of Israel accused Jesus of ill motives and abandoned him to a cursed cross.

The very ones who were supposed to be for him, turned out to be against him.

As Goliath yelled "Bring out a man!"  
So Pontius Pilate said "Behold the man!"

**Pilate was merciful, until it became risky.**

**2 Cor 5:21**

Jesus is our Champion. The man between us and Death. The man between us and YHWH's justice. He absorbed the wrath of God against our sin, and we were attributed his victory. We were counted as righteous.

Now- I want to show you what that means. for us now.

**2) Because Jesus is our confident and courageous champion, we now become his confident and courageous champions.**

Remember that Champion means "man between"

Look at the verse that comes right before 2 for 5:21

**2 Corinthians 5:20**

**20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us. We plead on Christ's behalf, "Be reconciled to God."**

An ambassador is a representative. When you see what Christ has done for you, the calling on everyone who believes is to become an ambassador- a representative to others for Christ.