

DEFEATING LIFE'S GIANT PROBLEMS **I Samuel 17:1-58**

INTRODUCTION:

We sing the song "Faith Is The Victory" but do we believe it? We belt out the lyrics to "Victory in Jesus" but is that our experience?

Be honest: Do you ever feel overwhelmed by the events of your life? Do you ever feel like you are facing problems of gigantic proportions? Enormous enemies? Huge hurdles? Massive mountains?

If you are anything like me, there may be times that, in addition to feeling intimidated by the enormity of the challenges you face, you also feel guilty because you're not enjoying that "Victory in Jesus" that you love to sing about.

The encounter between David and Goliath is usually one of the first stories we teach children in Sunday School. The picture of a mere boy doing battle against a towering Philistine giant is riveting. The kids love to hear how David, the youthful shepherd, defeated the enormous enemy that none of the trained adult soldiers would engage in battle. Boys and girls sit on the edges of their chairs to hear how young David took a sling and five river rocks as his only weapons. They get excited to hear how the giant taunted the boy. They get the point when we tell them that not only did David put a stone in his sling, he put his faith in God. The youngsters are intrigued to hear how God guided the stone to just the right spot in Goliath's head so that when he was struck, he died.

(Quite honestly, we often leave out the next part, which is that David then took Goliath's sword and beheaded the fallen giant. That's a little too gory a story for impressionable children. And we certainly don't want them to color a picture of that on their take-home papers for Mom and Dad to see.)

We tell the story early and we tell it often. We show the kids pictures to illustrate the prose. And we teach them songs, with actions, to drive the message home.

As adults, we remember the story but do we remember the point? We are familiar with the facts but have we forgotten the truths?

You see, the well-known account of David and Goliath is not just an exciting children's story; it is a guide for how to deal with life's giant problems. It is a guide for how to deal with **your** giant problems. As we revisit the record of this epic confrontation, I want you to listen for principles you can adopt so you can defeat the enemies who are coming against you.

In this story there is:

I. A vicious Foe (17:1-16)

I suppose when I was a kid in Sunday School, I may have thought that Goliath was as big as a house. I remember drawing pictures of David and Goliath that showed a little boy standing next to two hairy shins that disappeared off the top of my paper.

By making such an exaggerated caricature of these characters, in my mind, I had moved them from the realm of reality to the field of fantasy. No one is actually as huge as I made this giant out to be. And when the story ceased to seem real, it ceased to seem relevant. Like Zacchaeus, who was such a wee little man that he was no bigger than my thumb, I had relegated David and Goliath to the world of make-believe. I had “mythed” the point.

David was a historical figure. He really existed. And Goliath was a historical figure. He really existed, too. And while he really was a giant, he was not as big as a house. His size and strength were intimidating but he was measurable.

Scripture says that Goliath was 9 feet tall. Now that is big by anybody’s standards...even NBA standards. He wore a coat of scale armor that weighed 125 pounds and that is heavy by anybody’s measure. He had a spear with a huge shaft and it had an iron point that, itself, weighed 15 pounds. Make no mistake, Goliath was a giant but he was not like some videogame monster.

Do you ever find that you treat your giant problems a bit the way we have treated Goliath? Do you think they ever loom larger-than-life in your mind? Satan loves for us to blow our problems out of proportion because then they intimidate us into inaction. We get paralyzed by our problems and the enemy wins.

“The enemy”? Yes. You have an enemy who is out to destroy you. Some of the difficulties you face in your life are the natural consequences of bad choices. But some come your way because you have an enemy who wants to defeat you and drive you away from your heavenly Father who loves you.

David had his giant and we have our giant problems. David’s enemy was a 9-foot tall giant named Goliath who intimidated the army of Israel. Our giant problems have different names.

- In today’s financial climate, money matters can be a giant problem for some.
- Health issues can be a gigantic foe for some.

- Disappointment, discouragement, depression and despair can tower over some of us.

But know this: These are not your enemy. These are his weapons. Your enemy has an identity, he has a name, he has a target and he has a strategy. Your enemy is Satan; you are his target and he intends to separate you from your Father Who loves you and Who wants to save you from your enemy.

In this story, there is a vicious foe and in your story there is a vicious foe, too. Ephesians 6:12 says, *“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”*

II. **A Volunteer Fighter (17:17-37)**

The nation of Israel was at war with the Philistines. The Philistines had a larger army and better armaments. And they had one particularly impressive weapon: a giant of a man by the name of Goliath. Goliath was from the Philistine city of Gath.

Each day, Goliath would stand before the army of Israel and call out a challenge to anyone and everyone. He suggested that the Israelites send out one of their soldiers to fight him and these two would represent their armies and, in fact, their entire nations. If any Israelite would defeat Goliath, all of the Philistines would become subjects of the King of Israel. But if Goliath defeated the Israelite soldier, the Israelites would have to become subjects of the Philistines. That way, instead of scores of soldiers losing their lives in battle, only one man from one army would have to die.

Now the logical person to go against Goliath would have been the tallest and the strongest of the Israelites. Goliath was the biggest Philistine so you would have thought that King Saul would have conducted a search throughout Israel to find the biggest citizen in the realm to send out against Goliath.

But Saul never did that. He never did that for a simple reason: he already knew who the biggest Israelite was.

When Israel first clamored for a king, God sent the prophet Samuel to anoint one. 1 Samuel 9:1-2 reads:

¹ *There was a Benjamite, a man of standing, whose name was Kish son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Becorath, the son of Aphiah of Benjamin.* ² *He had a son named Saul, an impressive young man without equal among the Israelites—a head taller than any of the others.*

If Israel were to have sent their biggest man against the Philistines' biggest man, King Saul would have had to go to battle against Goliath – and he did not intend to do that.

Goliath was also well armed. I Samuel 17:5-7 records:

⁵He had a bronze helmet on his head and wore a coat of scale armor of bronze weighing five thousand shekels; ⁶on his legs he wore bronze greaves, and a bronze javelin was slung on his back. ⁷His spear shaft was like a weaver's rod, and its iron point weighed six hundred shekels. His shield bearer went ahead of him.

Maybe, instead of the tallest of the Israelites, the best-armed Israelite should go up against Goliath.

But I Samuel 13:22 notes that among all of the Israelites, only King Saul and his son, Jonathan, had swords. No one else among the Israelites had weapons. So Saul was not eager for the best-armed man to be sent into battle against Goliath.

One could also make a case that the king, as a kind of commander-in-chief, should have taken the lead in the conflict and should have engaged Goliath in battle. But Saul had no stomach for going out to face Goliath. The fact is that Saul, by stature, office and tools, was the logical choice to engage the giant; but he was unwilling.

Instead, a shepherd boy volunteered to face the foe. David was only a lad, was small in stature and was not even a soldier. His only physical weapon was a sling. His only ammunition was river rocks. But he was willing to confront the enemy.

When David volunteered to go against Goliath, his motives were even questioned. His own eldest brother, Eliab, accused him of coming to the battlefield just watch the Israelites be defeated. Eliab said David's heart was conceited and wicked. But David ignored the criticism and volunteered to face the giant.

Someone has said that God is not nearly so interested in our ability as He is in our availability. David was able to defeat the giant because he was available for service. God cannot use those who are unavailable to Him. The army of the Lord is an all-volunteer army. And David was just such a volunteer.

III. **A Victorious Faith (17:38-58)**

David's brothers disrespected him, Saul discounted him and Goliath despised him. But David did not let any of that discourage him. In spite of all of the negative comments from those around him, David drew his

strength from the Lord. He did not draw his strength from what others thought.

David knew he was a good marksman with a sling. He told King Saul that he had killed both lions and bears while protecting his father's flocks, so he was not intimidated by this Philistine giant. But David's confidence was not in his sling.

Nor was his confidence in himself. Although he had enjoyed some success in the pasture, this was something new. There is no indication that David had ever killed a human enemy before...particularly not one of Goliath's proportions. David had experience with the sling but his confidence was not in his experience.

No, David's confidence was in the Lord. In I Samuel 17:36-37 David explains:

*³⁶ Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, **because he has defied the armies of the living God.** ³⁷ **The LORD** who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear **will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.***"

David was not getting involved in some grudge-match with a boastful soldier for bragging rights in the barracks. This was not mere macho posturing between a couple of testosterone-driven guys who were being watched by their peers. David's willingness to stand up to Goliath was because he was incensed that the pagan giant had insulted God. David confronted Goliath to stop him from insulting the Lord. Are you willing to stand up for the One who gave His all for you?

David's motivation was pure: he was defending the reputation of the Lord. And his confidence was in the One for whom he was taking his stand. David said, "*The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.*" David's faith was in God.

Like David, we can confront our giant problems if we do so for the sake of the Lord, in the power of the Lord and with faith in the Lord.

I like the way George Duffield phrased it in a familiar hymn:

Stand up!--stand up for Jesus!
Stand in His strength alone;
The arm of flesh will fail you,
Ye dare not trust your own.

CONCLUSION:

Bruce Larson, in his book “Believe and Belong” tells of how he helped people who were struggling to defeat the giants in their lives. He writes, “For many years, I worked in New York City, and counseled at my office any number of people who were wrestling with situations. Often I would suggest they walk with me from my office down to the RCA building on Fifth Avenue. In the entrance of that building is a gigantic statue of Atlas, a perfectly proportioned man who, with all his muscles straining, is holding the world upon his shoulders. There he is, the most powerfully built man in the world, and he can barely stand up under his burden. ‘Now that’s one way you can live,’ I would point out, ‘trying to carry the world on your shoulders. But now, come across the street with me.’ On the other side of Fifth Avenue is St. Patrick’s Cathedral, and there behind the altar is a statue of Jesus as a boy, perhaps eight or nine years old, and with no effort, he is holding the world in one hand.”

The truth is, we have a choice, and we are faced with a question: who are we relying on to defeat our giants? Who are we counting on to carry our burdens? The secret to overcoming giants is understanding what David understood: the battle belongs to the Lord and He has placed at our feet all the ammunition we need to defeat our giants!

If you are walking with the Lord, your foes are not only your enemies: they are God’s. When you are doing God’s will, they are not just opposing you: they are opposing the Lord. And when you engage them, just like David, the battle is not merely yours: it is the Lord’s.

INVITATION: # 704 – “*God Will Make a Way*”