

Message #7

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Life of David

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## DEALING WITH GIANTS

### 1 SAMUEL 17

#### INTRODUCTION

Giants have a bad reputation in our Christian tradition. The King James Version of the Bible says in Genesis #6 v. 4, **“There were giants in the earth in those days...”** It goes on to say that the sons of God came in to the daughters of men. The people who resulted had a corrupting influence upon the earth. For the evil of the inhabitants of the earth was so great that the Lord brought about the universal flood of Noah’s day.

Centuries later Moses led the Hebrew people out of Egypt, and God directed them to the promised land of Canaan. Spies were sent to scout out the land. They came back with a report that it was a wonderful place. But at the end of Numbers #13 they declared, **“And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.”** (KJV) Most of the Hebrews were intimidated by this report. They refused to trust God. As a result the Lord forced them to spend the next forty years wandering in the wilderness.

The most translated and most printed book in the English language after the Bible is *Pilgrim’s Progress*. At one point in his journey to the celestial city Christian departs from the way and finds himself on the grounds of Doubting Castle. He is imprisoned in a dungeon by the lord of the land, the Giant Despair. It is only when he realizes that he has the key Promise that he is able to escape the clutches of the evil giant.

All of us have had experience with giants who seek to control us through fear and intimidation. Sometimes these giants take the form of real people. They may be bosses, or abusive spouses, or bullies at school, or correctional officers, or parents. Sometimes these giants take the form of circumstances. These intimidating circumstances include health challenges, unemployment, death, loneliness, tests at school. Sometimes the giants in our lives are addictions of various sorts with which we struggle.

We need help in dealing with all of these giants in our lives. I believe that the story of David and Goliath has lessons to teach us about dealing with the giants.

I.

Consider first THE SETTING FOR THE STORY. (PROJECTOR ON--- I. THE SETTING FOR THE STORY) One of the longest and most detailed incidents recorded in the Bible is the story of David and Goliath. I find it difficult to consider the story in detail without having awareness of the entire narrative. That is why I asked Mac to read all of Chapter 17 in 1 Samuel.

Most of you are generally familiar with the story. It is fairly easy to understand the basic plot. There are some things that we can glean from examining it more closely. The time setting is about 1000 BC. We have seen that the Hebrews wanted a king like all of the other nations had. So the Lord through the prophet Samuel appointed the kind of king whom they wanted. He was Saul. In Chapters 13-15 we saw that Saul had serious character flaws. He was guilty of unhealthy presumption, selfish pridefulness, and flagrant disobedience.

Saul had initial success in leading his people in defeating surrounding enemies. But because of a foolish decision on his part, they did not decisively defeat the Philistines. Now the Philistines have returned to impose their will upon the Hebrews.

In #16 we have seen that David had a heart for God. In some ways he was an unlikely choice to replace King Saul. He was the youngest of eight brothers. His job was watching the family flock of sheep and goats. But character counts. We saw that after the prophet Samuel anointed him to be king, David went back to shepherding the family sheep. He continued to be in submission to his father. He continued to do his menial job of watching sheep. David trusted the promise and providence of God. His musical ability somehow came to the attention of the royal staff, and David was called upon to play music for the king, who was occasionally plagued by an evil spirit. David's heart for God is further evidenced by his genuine service and care for Saul, the man he has been divinely tasked to replace.

(PHILISTINES MAP) The Philistines occupied the coastal plain by the Mediterranean Sea. They had a technological and manufacturing advantage. The Israelites only had 3K coverage, while the Philistines had already adopted 5K technology. The Philistines had iron weapons. The Israelites had only brass technology. After an earlier defeat by the Israelite forces led by Saul, the Philistines were now pushing east into Hebrew territory.

(DAVID 2A) A battle was looming in the Valley of Elah, in territory assigned to the tribe of Judah, to the west of Jerusalem and Bethlehem. (DAVID 2B) The Hebrews occupied the territory on the north side of this wadi. The Philistine army was on the south. (DAVID 2C) Viewed from the west, this is what the battle scene looks like today.

Verses 4-7 of our chapter provide a description of Goliath. Some Bible teachers claim that it is the most detailed physical description of any human that we have in the Bible. (GOLIATH INSCRIPTION) Archaeologists found this piece of clay pottery in the ruins of ancient Gath. It is believed to be the oldest Philistine inscription that has ever been discovered. It has the name Goliath written upon it.

(GOLIATH) The thing that especially distinguishes Goliath is his size. The original text of v 4 is uncertain here. Early Hebrew manuscripts describe him as being six cubits and a span. The early Greek translation of v. 4 and one of the Dead Sea Scrolls say that he was four cubits and a span. There is also some uncertainty about what the standard was for a cubit at this time. We have a bit more certainty about the weight of his armor and the head of his spear. His armor weighted at least 125 pounds and his iron spear head was at least 15 pounds. So whatever his exact height, Goliath had be really big to be decked out with what he was carrying. (PROJECTOR OFF)

The nature of the combat involved here may seem strange to us. But there are a number of examples of this throughout history. Historians refer to it as single combat warfare. The theoretical idea is that each side in a fight provides a representative to fight the other person. The loser agrees to submit to the side which wins this two person battle. In total a whole lot less blood would be shed. How often the losing side actually submitted to the winner is less certain.

A somewhat more recent example of this type of battle involves Captain John Smith. Before he came to Jamestown in the New World, he was fighting in Hungary against the Turks. On one occasion the supposedly Christian army was surrounding a fortress held by the Turks. The Turkish commander challenged the Christians to a one-on-one combat with himself. John Smith won that battle and returned with the guy's head. The challenge was reissued on the second and third days. Smith came away with three heads as a result of this combat. Shortly after that, the Turkish city was captured.

In our story the representative of the Philistine army issues a daily challenge for the Hebrews to come up with someone who will fight him. According to v. 10, **“And the Philistine said, ‘I defy the ranks of**

**Israel this day. Give me a man, that we may fight together.” Verse 11: “When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid.”**

II.

Let's consider then: DAVID VS. GOLIATH: THE TRIUMPH OF FAITH. (PROJECTOR ON--- DAVID VS. GOLIATH: THE...) In #16 David was anointed to be king by the prophet Samuel. David's circumstances don't immediately change after that. He remains subject to his father. He still cares for the family's flock. He is still the kid brother. His acceptance of his situation demonstrates both a heart for God and faith in God's promises. He doesn't rebel against his circumstances. He doesn't try to make God's will happen.

Somehow the royal staff becomes aware of David's music ability. He is called to the palace. He genuinely serves King Saul. I noted last week that in the future history of Israel there would be many men who would strive to manipulate circumstances and even kill in order to occupy the kingship of either the northern or southern kingdoms of Israel. David is not like that. He patiently trusts God and does what is right.

In the time preceding this battle v. 15 of our chapter tells us, “**...but David went back and forth from Saul to feed his father's sheep at Bethlehem.**” What may have seemed most of the time as a boring and mundane job dealing with the sheep was occasionally interrupted with moments of terror. We read later in the story in vv. 34 & 35, “**But David said to Saul, ‘Your servant used to keep sheep for his father. And when there came a lion, or a bear, and took a lamb from the flock, I went after him and struck him and delivered it out of his mouth. And if he arose against me, I caught him by his beard and struck him and killed him.’**” The grammar implies that this happened more than once. The text also indicates that he did this singlehandedly.

To accomplish this without the aid of modern weaponry is pretty amazing. This appears to involve the development of David's faith. He had a specific promise from God that he was going to be king of Israel some day. If that promise was true, then David could not be killed. David's encounters with lions and bears gave him added assurance that God was with him in these most difficult encounters.

There appears to be a military stalemate in #17. Each side occupies high ground on either side of this wadi. Both sides realize that it is costly to attack an opponent's position on the high ground. Jesse sends David with supplies to support his older brothers and their commander who are serving on the front line. David comes upon the scene and sees the Philistine champion taunt the Israelites. David asks about

what is going on. He learns that Saul has offered rewards to the one who would successfully take on the challenge from Goliath.

In one sense Saul should have been the one to take on Goliath. We were told earlier that he was head and shoulders taller than the other Hebrews. He was the only one who had armor. He had successfully led his army in earlier battles. But God's Spirit has departed from him, and he is afraid.

David's oldest brother Eliab catches up to David, and he is disdainful. He accuses baby brother of having wrong motives in showing up on the scene. He is jealous of the blessing that God has bestowed upon him. Word gets back to Saul about David's interest in being Israel's representative in this contest. Saul knows David from his service as a musician to the king. So David gets a hearing before him. According to v. 33, **"And Saul said to David, 'You are but a youth, and he has been a man of war from his youth.'"** David responds by telling him about his experience with lions and bears.

In Sunday school lessons David was usually pictured as a scrawny kid. I don't believe that this is accurate. We know already that Saul is a large man. There would have been no point in trying on the king's armor if David was just a scrawny kid. Look closely at v. 39: **"...and David strapped his sword over his armor. And he tried in vain to go, for he had not tested them. Then David said to Saul, 'I cannot go with these, for I have not tested them.' So David put them off."** David doesn't say that the armor is five sizes too large for him. He indicates that he has no experience in using armor. He doesn't want to enter combat never having used armor.

So David chooses his own weapons. He uses a stick, five stones, and a sling. This was not the kind of sling shot that some of us had when we were growing up. (DAVID 2G) It was a sling that looked more like this. Palestinian youth today often use such slings to hurl stones at soldiers of the Israeli Defense Force. The stones thrown in this way reach speeds of between 100 and 150 miles an hour.

Stones which archaeologists believe were used in slings were found in the ancient Israeli city of Lachish. They were made of flint and were about 2 ½ inches in diameter. They weighed about nine ounces each. (PROJECTOR OFF)

You are all familiar how this story plays out. David's stone lands in an unprotected part of Goliath's head. It either kills him instantly, or he is knocked unconscious and David cuts off the giant's head with his sword. According to v. 54 David comes away with Goliath's head and his impressive weapons. Back in

v. 18 Jesse had instructed his son to bring food to his brothers and cheeses to their commander. In the second part of the verse our ESV translation quotes Jesse, **“See if your brothers are well, and bring some token from them.”** Some of your translations say, **“bring news of them.”**

The Hebrew word in question appears only one other time in the Old Testament, in Proverbs 17:18. The idea of a “pledge, security, or token” seems to fit there. So perhaps Jesse was asking for a note or even some spoil of war indicating that his sons and their army have been successful. The token that David comes away with is much more than his father could ever have imagined.

So one of the central messages of this story has to do with faith in God and His promises. The Lord had promised David through the prophet Samuel that one day he would be king of Israel. Along the way there were certain experiences that developed David’s faith. From his obscurity as a shepherd in Bethlehem, he was called to use his musical ability in the palace of the king. In his encounter with lions and bears as a shepherd, he decisively and amazingly killed powerful predators. Now he defeated the giant Goliath.

David had a promise from God specifically concerning him and his future. We may not have such a specific promise. But living in New Testament times we have other promises that were not available to David in his day. In dealing with the giants in our lives, we often have an emotional reaction of feeling alone. In the Book of Hebrews in the New Testament (PROJECTOR ON--- HEBREWS 13:5) Christians have this divine promise: **“I will never leave you nor forsake you.”**

In Philippians #4 the Apostle Paul explained that he had learned how to live in every kind of circumstance, especially in terms of finances. (PHILIPPIANS 4:13) He assured his fellow Christians, **“I can do all things through him who strengthens me.”**

The experience of David is not unique in the sense that God gives all of His people challenges and trials, at least partly for the purpose of developing our faith. The divine intention is that our experiences will help us to have the triumph of faith as we encounter new trials.

III.

There is another lens through which we should examine our story this morning. It is DAVID VS. GOLIATH: THE CONCERN FOR GOD’S HONOR. (III. DAVID VS. GOLIATH: THE...) This is not only a story about the

importance of overcoming a powerful enemy through faith in God and His promises. It is also a story about the importance of standing up for God's honor. The Philistines were occupying territory which God had allocated to the children of Israel. Now they were advancing into territory that was actually occupied by the Israelites.

Goliath, the representative of the pagan Philistines was challenging the people of God. According to v. 10, **"And the Philistine said, 'I defy the ranks of Israel this day. Give me a man, that we may fight together.'"** The original word for "defy" appears six times in this chapter. It means "to reproach, to mock, to taunt, to deride, and/or to defy." In each case it is used in regard to what Goliath says about Israel and its army. Twice David describes what Goliath has said and done as defiance of the army of the living God.

When David shows up on the scene of battle, he witnesses Goliath issuing this challenge. The soldiers describe what has happened. According to the beginning of v. 25, **"And the men of Israel said, 'Have you seen this man who has come up? Surely he has come up to defy Israel.'"** At the end of v. 26 David asks, **"For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?"** This is the first time that David speaks in the Biblical record. His concern is for the honor of God. In #15 we saw that Saul was building a monument to himself. Here we see that David's concern is the honor of the living God.

David is allowed to represent Israel on the battlefield. As he approaches Goliath, the giant utters threats against David. In the second part of v. 43 we are told, **"And the Philistine cursed David by his gods."** Thus this has become a duel between the gods. David responds in vv. 45-47, **"You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head. And I will give the dead bodies of the host of the Philistines this day to the birds of the air and to the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the Lord saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hand."**

This is the heart of David for God. This is the man of genuine faith. This is the young man who is not focusing upon his own reputation or his career or his glory. His concern is for God's glory and reputation. This is the hero, this is the future king, this is the man after God's own heart who is concerned that the world may know that there is a God in Israel.

Genesis #12 described the covenant that the Lord made with Abraham and his descendants. He promised to bless Abraham's descendants in a way different from the other nations of the world so that those nations would see that there is a God in Israel. This is why God would send a son of David with a special mission, with the job of being Messiah for all the nations of the world. In Isaiah 49 v. 6 (ISAIAH 49:6) the Lord says of this future Messiah, **"I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."**

What does this mean for us? It means that we ought to be sensitive to challenges to the honor of God. (PROJECTOR OFF) There are battlefields around us where the honor of God is at stake. In our public school classrooms children are taught that this is a materialistic universe and the existence of life can be explained by natural processes. The honor of the God who created us is at stake. David himself would declare in Psalm 139 that he was created in the womb, and that he was fearfully and wonderfully made. The cultural elites around us would have us believe that women have a sacred right to destroy those precious lives. The Bible declares that God made us male and female. Our culture in recent days has declared that we have the right to determine our own sexual identity. There are also idols that surround us. There are people and hobbies and sports and entertainment and careers and money and addictions that would tempt us to believe that they deserve honor above all else, including the God who created us.

The New Testament announces that eternal salvation is available by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Religious groups around us would have us believe that the crucifixion of Jesus is not enough to provide for our salvation. There is something more that we must do. We must be good enough, or belong to the right religious group, or have the right religious ritual, or follow the right rules in order to get to heaven. In all of this the honor of God is at stake. Will there be heroes who step onto these battlefields with a concern not for their own reputation but for the glory of God?

IV.

There is a fourth lens through which our story can be considered. It is DAVID VS. GOLIATH: THE ANTICIPATION OF CHRIST'S TRIUMPH. (PROJECTOR ON--- IV. DAVID VS. GOLIATH...) I pointed out in an earlier message that Jesus in the New Testament is referred to as the Son of David. The genealogies of Jesus in Matthew and Luke trace Jesus' ancestry back to David. He is indeed the physical descendant of David.

I suspect that there is more that is meant by the title "Son of David" than just physical descent from David. There are characteristics and actions in the life of David that anticipate and foreshadow the life and accomplishments of Jesus. Our chapter has probably the longest and most detailed description of



any one incident in the life of David. So we might expect that there are elements in this story that anticipate in some way the character, the life, the actions, and ultimately the triumph of Jesus Christ.

I thought that we might try a little audience participation here. I would like you to come up with some observations from this chapter where David and his actions anticipate in some way things that Jesus will do and say and be. I will begin with one that is not immediately obvious. David is the only person in the Old Testament with the name "David." In that he is unique. Also the name "David" is believed to mean "beloved." David was truly beloved by God. Jesus was not only unique, but He was also beloved by God. At His baptism a voice came out of heaven and declared, "You are my beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased." (Mark 1:11) At the transfiguration of Jesus, a voice came out of the cloud and announced, "This is My beloved Son, listen to Him!" (Mark 9:7)

Can you think of some other parallels?

2. OBEDIENCE TO HIS FATHER Even after David was anointed king, and even after he had begun to serve in the palace of King Saul, he spent time at home and remained in subjection to his father Jesse. It was at his father's direction that he brought supplies to his brothers on the battlefield. Jesus likewise as a child remained in subjection to his earthly parents. In His public ministry He came to do the will of His Heavenly Father.

3. EARTHLY BEGINNINGS IN BETHLEHEM. David was born in Bethlehem. So was Jesus.

4. REJECTION BY EARTHLY FAMILY David's mission and appearance on the battlefield were criticized by Eliab, his oldest brother. Perhaps his statements reflected the attitude of the other two older brothers on the battlefield. Likewise Jesus earthly family did not accept Him or His mission. At one point they set out to take custody of Him in Capernaum because they thought that He had lost His mind.

A variation of this theme would be the fact that Eliab and the older brothers were closest to the revelation of God concerning the mission that God had for David. They had direct exposure to the Word of God that came through the prophet Samuel. Yet they opposed Jesus here. Likewise it was the Pharisees, the rabbis, who had direct exposure to the Word of God and the Old Testament prophecies concerning the coming Messiah. Yet they did not accept Jesus and the mission that God had for Him.

5. SHEPHERD David was raised as a shepherd. Jesus would later declare that He was the Good Shepherd.

6. MAN'S REPRESENTATIVE David entered this battle as the representative of his people. Likewise Jesus by virtue of His humanity served as our representative when He died upon the cross.

7. SOLE QUALIFICATION David was the only one who would or could take on the giant and successfully win the battle. Likewise it was Jesus alone who could accomplish our salvation.

8. 40 DAYS OF TESTING Goliath challenged the people of God for forty days. Likewise Jesus was tempted by the devil for forty days in the wilderness.

9. SALVATION David's victory led to the salvation and deliverance of his people. Jesus' victory in His death and resurrection led to the eternal salvation of His people.

10. WEAPONS USED The weapons which David used to accomplish his victory were seemingly foolish. It initially appeared ridiculous that David could use a stick and five stones to defeat Goliath who was protected by armor and fitted out with a spear and a shield and a sword. Likewise the weapons by which Jesus defeated the devil were seemingly ridiculous. How could death on a Roman cross defeat Satan? (1 CORINTHIANS 1:18) In 1 Corinthians #1 v. 18 the Apostle Paul wrote, **"For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."**

11. DISARMING OF THE GIANT As a result of David's action, both Goliath and the enemy Philistines were disarmed. Their control over the Israelites was destroyed. What did Jesus accomplish? (HEBREWS 2:14) According to Hebrews #2 v. 14, **"Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil."**

12. KINGSHIP David's victory propelled him to fame and kingship. That is similar to what happened with Jesus. (EPHESIANS 1:20-22) Consider Ephesians #1 vv. 20-22: **"...he [God] raised him [Jesus] from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named..."**

There were a couple of key observers to this battle which David undertook. These two men had radical and contrasting reactions to what they saw. There was Eliab, the oldest brother, who was not accepting of the mission that had been given to David. He impugned his motive, doubted his ability, and criticized his mission. We are not told what his reaction was after David's victory.

There was also Jonathan, the son of David, and one traditionally expected to inherit the throne. David was his potential rival. Yet in v. 1 of #18 we are told, **"...the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul."** Jonathan could have been jealous. But instead he loved David for who he proved himself to be and for what he had done.

Those are the two possible reactions that we can have to the Son of David. We can be Eliabs who are skeptical and critical about the life, the person, and the accomplishments of Jesus. Or we can be Jonathans who recognize Jesus for who He is and what He has done in dying for us on the cross. We ought to respond with love and commitment to Him.