

DAVID AND GOLIATH

1 Samuel 17:1-58

Key Verse: 17:45

David said to the Philistine, “You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.

This famous story teaches us how one young man had a true faith in God. David trusted in God when everyone else trembled in fear. He fought a battle to restore God’s honor. He depended on God in his fight. May God help us to fight our own Goliaths by depending on God!

I. GOLIATH TERRIFIES ISRAEL (1-11)

Look at verses 1-3. Once again, the aggressive Philistines assembled their forces to wage war against the Israelites. King Saul mustered his forces to draw up the battle line to meet the enemy. The Philistines occupied one hill and the Israelites another with the Valley of Elah between them. Neither side wanted to attack first. They knew that the causality would be heavy. A stalemate followed. However, the Philistines had the upper hand. They had a secret weapon. *A champion named Goliath, who was from Gath, came out of the Philistine camp* (4). This man was huge, over nine feet tall, two feet taller than Shaquille O’Neal. He had a bronze helmet on his head. He wore a coat of scale armor that weighed 125 pounds. He was holding a spear with its pointed iron head that weighed 15 pounds. He was not only big but also trained to be a fighter from his youth (33). He exuded his confidence as a champion of fighters after defeating many opponents. He was a more imposing fighter than any of the heavy-weight boxing champions we have seen on TV.

Goliath stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, “Why do you come out and line up for battle?” (8) His booming voice echoed through the whole valley. All soldiers and commanders saw this man with awe and were mesmerized. The whole valley felt silent as he shouted his threat of terror against the Israelites. Goliath bellowed: *Am I not a Philistine, and are you not the servants of Saul? Choose a man and have him come down to me. If he is able to fight and kill me, we will become your subjects; but if I overcome him and kill him, you will become our subjects and serve us. This day I defy the ranks of Israel! Give me a man and let us fight each other”* (8-10). *On hearing the Philistine’s words, Saul and all the Israelites were dismayed and terrified* (11). Once again, they trembled in fear. And this went on for 40 days. Every morning and evening, the giant fighter came



out to terrorize the Israelites (16). It was a very effective psychological warfare waged by the Philistines. The Israelites were demoralized even before the battle.

II. DAVID SEES GOLIATH WITH THE EYES OF FAITH (12-27)

Meanwhile, what was the boy David doing? David had been anointed to be king over Israel by Samuel (16:13). He was to replace King Saul. But David didn't go around bragging about this. He didn't get ahead of God. Instead, he was faithful to the tasks entrusted to him. He was still faithful in obeying his old father. He was faithful to his part-time job as a musician for King Saul. He went back and forth from Saul to tend his father's sheep at Bethlehem (15).

One day, his father Jesse told David to deliver some food (roasted grain and bread) to his three oldest brothers, saying, *"Take along these ten cheeses to the commander of their unit. See how your brothers are and bring back some assurance from them. They are with Saul and all the men of Israel in the Valley of Elah, fighting against the Philistines"* (18-19). Actually, the army of Israel was not fighting. The soldiers were being terrorized by Goliath everyday.

Early in the morning David left the flock with a shepherd, loaded up and set out, as Jesse had directed. He reached the camp as the army was going out to its battle positions, shouting the war cry (20). Once again, when the Philistine giant came out to shout his usual defiance and David heard it. When the Israelites saw him, they all ran from him in great fear (22). But what was David's reaction? He said, *"What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and removes this disgrace from Israel? Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?"* (26). Everyone in the battle field only saw how huge and how strong Goliath was. But David saw him differently. He called him "this uncircumcised Philistine," meaning he was a man with no relationship with God. He might be a big man, but he had no covenant relationship with God and no future in God's kingdom. David saw him with the eyes of faith in the living God.

This reminds us of Caleb and Joshua who were part of the 12-men reconnaissance team that Moses sent to explore the land of Canaan. The ten men of the team brought a negative report, saying the Canaanites were so huge that the Israelites looked like grasshoppers (Nu 13:33). But Caleb and Joshua said, "If the Lord is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us" (Nu 14:8). Unlike the majority of the team member, these two men of faith saw things differently because they saw them with the eyes of faith in the living God.



We should also learn to see things in the eyes of faith. In human eyes, campus mission seems impossible. Today's ivory towers are steeped with people and ideas that

defy the people of the living God. We look so small and incapable before them and our challenges insurmountable. But we must see young students with the eyes of compassion. Jesus would see them as “sheep without a shepherd.” May God help us to see them with the eyes of faith!

III. DAVID DECIDES TO FIGHT GOLIATH (28-37)

When David asked the question, *“What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and removes this disgrace from Israel?”* (26), he had already made up his mind to fight Goliath. It wasn’t because of the rewards that the king promised for the man who killed the giant (great wealth, marriage to a princess and life-time tax exemption for his family). David’s desire was to remove the disgrace from Israel and honor God. But he had to first overcome discouragement that came from none other than his own brother. When Eliab, his oldest brother, heard him speaking with the soldiers, he burned with anger at him and said, *“Why have you come down here? And with whom did you leave those few sheep in the desert? I know how conceited you are and how wicked your heart is; you came down only to watch the battle.”* We have to remember that when we decide to do something big or small to honor God, we don’t always have people around us cheering for us. We may have some detractors who discourage us. We must overcome by focusing our eyes on God. David could have argued with his brother about how he did not deserve the comments like that from him. But he didn’t. He simply said, *“Now what have I done? Can’t I even speak?”* and turned away to someone else and brought up the same matter. We should listen to others carefully, but we should not linger too long on their discouraging words when our motive to serve the Lord is pure and clear.

What David said was overheard and reported to Saul. The king was very happy to hear that someone was willing to fight the giant. He thought a battle-tested, patriotic soldier finally came forward for his country. But his hope was immediately dashed when he saw it was only a boy who came forward. David said to Saul, *“Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him”* (32). Somehow, Saul was not impressed. He replied, *“You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a boy, and he has been a fighting man from his youth”* (33).

What was David’s reply? Look at verses 34-37. *“Your servant has been keeping his father’s sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. 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. 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 had two points to make. First, he said he had a



battle experience, though it was not against men, but against ferocious animals. When a lion or a bear came to attack his sheep, he went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. Yes, the Philistine giant was a formidable opponent, but a lion or a bear also was, and he had killed both the lion and the bear. Second, and more important, David said he believed that God would deliver him from the hand of the Philistine. He was saying, “I may be only a boy, but the living God can use me to restore his honor among our people!” King Saul was impressed by David. Of course, he had no other alternative anyway. The king said to David, “Go, and the Lord be with you!”

How could this young man David have such confidence? Think especially about his shepherd’s heart, his fighting spirit and his faith in God. What can we learn here about the importance of the small and personal battles in our lives? His confidence came from his faith in the living God. David had a shepherd’s heart. He went after the lion and the bear, risking his own life. He had a fighting spirit. He was willing to fight for his sheep and for God’s honor. He would not run away in fear, as others did. We should also fight by faith our small and personal battles in our lives. For example, it is not easy to fight our laziness. When we are tired from our work or from taking care of children, it is so easy for us to set aside our Bible study or prayer. This battle is not easy even though the enemy is within us. We need a fighting spirit from God even for small battles like this in our lives.

IV. “I COME AGAINST YOU IN THE NAME OF THE LORD” (38-58)

Look at verse 38. *Then Saul dressed David in his own tunic. He put a coat of armor on him and a bronze helmet on his head.* Saul tried to dress and equip David with conventional items. David fastened on his sword over the tunic (military uniform) and tried to walk around. But he felt uncomfortable and clumsy, because he was not used to them. He felt like a rugby player with football gear on him. He felt like fish out of water. “I cannot go in these,” he said to the king, “because I am not used to them.” He took them off (39). Instead, he went out to meet the giant, only with his shepherd’s staff in his hand, five smooth stones in his shepherd’s bag and a slingshot (40). The sling and stone was the best weapon for him, because he was not weighed down by it. He was comfortable with it. Most of all, he knew it was not the physical weapon or his own strength that would give him victory. No, it was God who would fight for him.

As Goliath looked over David who was coming forward to fight him, he saw that he was only a boy, ruddy and handsome, and he despised him. He said to David, “*Am I a dog, that you come at me with sticks? Come here, and I’ll give your flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field!*” (43-44) What was David’s reply? Look at verses 45-47. *David said to the Philistine, “You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will hand you over*



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to me, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head. Today I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give all of you into our hands." There several things we need to think about.

First, David said, "I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty."

The purpose of David's fight was to restore the honor of God. He went to the battle in the name of his God. On the other hand, the Philistine giant used the names of his gods only to curse (43). It was all about his own honor and glory. Sadly, in our society, some people also use God's name only to curse. Honoring God's name is furthest in their minds. But David was indignant when he heard God's name defied by the giant. May God help us to honor his name in our lives! Jesus taught us that the first thing we should pray is, "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name...." (Mt 6:9).

Second, David said, "This day the Lord will hand you over to me." Goliath depended on his size and strength. David depended on God. He said, "... the battle is the Lord's" (47). He believed that the Lord would give him victory over his enemies. We are soldiers of Christ. We are so small and weak compared to Goliath. We need to depend on the Lord Almighty in our spiritual battle. We must believe that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves.

Third, David said, "the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel."

David wanted the name of God to be honored and exalted by people of the whole world. Goliath was all about his own glory. He wanted the championship belt and the super bowl ring for himself. But David was not after his own glory. He wanted the whole world to know that there is a living God in Israel. David had a world mission vision.

What was the result of the duel between the shepherd boy David and the giant Goliath? Actually it was kind of anti-climax. It ended rather quickly, quicker than the game-winning touchdown by Tim Tebow in overtime against the Pittsburgh Steelers. David slung a stone and it struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his brain and he fell facedown on the ground. Just like that, Goliath went down. He didn't even have a chance to get to use his heavy sword. David finished him off with the giant's own sword.

What was the effect on the Philistines, the Israelites and Saul? *When the Philistines saw that their hero was dead, they turned and ran. Then the men of Israel and Judah surged forward with a shout and pursued the Philistines to the entrance of Gath and to the gates of Ekron (51-52). As soon as David returned from killing the Philistine, Abner took him and brought him before Saul, with David still holding the Philistine's head. "Whose son are you,*



young man?” Saul asked him. David said, “I am the son of your servant Jesse of Bethlehem” (57-58).

So the question we want to ask today is what are our contemporary Goliaths and how can we fight them? Any forces of this world that defy the name of the living God and plant fear in us are our Goliaths. For example, materialism and pleasure-seeking are some of the Goliath-like ideas that challenge us. In our campus ministry, we invite young people to our Bible study so that we can help them to meet Jesus personally and receive the gift of eternal life. The reality, however, is that we often get responses such as “I have to work this weekend to make money. I have no time for things like that!” or “Wednesday fellowship? I’d rather go to a Wednesday party to hang out with my friends!” When this happens to us time and again, we feel demoralized and even defeated. We can become like the Israelites who were demoralized by the taunting words of Goliath even before the fight. We cannot fight these kinds of enemies with our sword and spear. We have to believe, as David did, that it is the Lord’s battle and he will fight with us. We must depend on the Lord Almighty. And we should have a clear purpose to honor God’s name among people. By faith, we can use our own five pebbles and sling shot that God has given to each of us. What are our pebbles and sling shot? They are our “five loaves and two fish.” It is the word of God we have in our hearts. It is our spirit of prayer. During our Leadership Retreat, we thought about the various gifts of God we can use to advance the kingdom of God, including wisdom, intelligence, charming character, communication skills, and so on. The word of God and prayer are our most basic weapon. Let us take “the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” and our earnest prayer so that we can defeat our own Goliaths! (Eph 6:17-18)

In today’s passage, we learned that we should see things of this world with the eyes of faith in God. By faith in God, we can fight our own Goliaths to restore God’s honor among us. Materialism and hedonism loom over us like Goliaths today, as we struggle to share the gospel of Jesus with young people. But we can overcome these enemies with our weapons of the word of God and prayer, because it is the Lord’s battle and he will give us the final victory!