

### **“Facing Giants (3)”**

1 Samuel 17:41-51

<sup>41</sup> And the Philistine moved forward and came near to David, with his shield-bearer in front of him. <sup>42</sup> And when the Philistine looked and saw David, he disdained him, for he was but a youth, ruddy and handsome in appearance. <sup>43</sup> And the Philistine said to David, “Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?” And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. <sup>44</sup> The Philistine said to David, “Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and to the beasts of the field.” <sup>45</sup> Then David said to the Philistine, “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. <sup>46</sup> 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, <sup>47</sup> 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.” <sup>48</sup> When the Philistine arose and came and drew near to meet David, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine. <sup>49</sup> And David put his hand in his bag and took out a stone and slung it and struck the Philistine on his forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell on his face to the ground.

<sup>50</sup> So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and struck the Philistine and killed him. There was no sword in the hand of David. <sup>51</sup> Then David ran and stood over the Philistine and took his sword and drew it out of its sheath and killed him and cut off his head with it. When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled. (ESV)

I tried to think of how to identify with Goliath in this story. I think I've told you that sometimes when I preach I try and put myself in the position of different people, and I was thinking about it this week. I thought of when I was in the Army in a Ranger battalion for four years. Every now and then someone that shouldn't have made it there, would slip through the cracks on their way into a Ranger battalion. You think, “How did this guy ever end up in a Ranger battalion?” At that point my job as a sergeant in a Ranger battalion was to make sure this guy decided to leave the Ranger battalion. Since it's all voluntary, I just had to make his life miserable enough to volunteer to leave. I would do that every now and then. There was a guy named Rich (that's not his real name) who just made my life miserable. I would never just punish someone. I would never ride beside them on a bike while I made them run ten miles. Whatever I did to make them miserable, I would do with them. One day after we'd worked from about five in the morning to five in the afternoon, I told Rich, “I want you to meet me outside the barracks because you and I will be going on a pleasant five-mile flak vest run” – which means you wear your flak vest and run five miles and keep up with me if you can. We went on this run and for almost five complete miles, I was dragging this guy and yelling at him. Then we could see the barracks maybe five hundred meters away and the rest of the sergeants sitting outside around the fence relaxing. Rich saw them, too. There was a huge open field between us and them and all of a sudden he took off at a dead sprint. In other words, he was trying to make me look bad so that he would come across the field at a dead sprint and passed me. Well, that was his biggest and only mistake because I ran, caught up to him, and passed him. He was gone in a couple days. Why was I so worried about him beating me? Any of you who have been in the military or on sports teams know that I would never have been able to live it down had I come in behind this private that I was trying to get rid of. The rest of the sergeants would have just given me a hard time and razzed me for the rest of my Army career, and I would have rather done anything than have to live through that. That is the tension that Goliath faces as we look at this text this morning.

Up to this point we've been talking about the story of David and Goliath, where King Saul, who is currently Israel's king, should have faced Goliath. Goliath was a trash talker. Israel was on one side of the valley of Elah and the Philistines were on the other. For forty days Goliath would come down into the valley and say, “Send out your champion. We will fight, and if I win, we take all the money and the girls and the land, and if you win, you take all the money and the girls and the land. But it's only going to be the two of us.” Forty days and no one came out. The Bible says that Saul and all of Israel were very afraid. Then David came along. All David did was ask a question. David happened to hear Goliath talking trash and said, “Who is this uncircumcised Philistine to challenge the armies of the living God?” That's the right question. To call Goliath an uncircumcised Philistine isn't to mean he's uncouth or he's dirty. It just means, “Who is this uncircumcised person – someone who is outside the covenant with God.” To be inside God's covenant means you are protected and blessed by God. “Who is someone outside to defy all of those of us inside?”

The biggest roadblocks that David ran into were those inside. In other words it would have been the Old Testament version of church people. The first person he ran into was his brother, and his brother said, “You know, you're just smug. You just came down here to see the fight.” David said, “Hey, I'm just asking a question.” Then King Saul heard that David had been asking this question. Saul was so desperate that he was willing to pay someone else to fight for him. Apparently he got to the point he was even willing to see if a sixteen-year-old boy might have what it took. David came and said, “I'll fight him.” Saul said, “You can't.” David said, “Oh, I can. I fought the lion – beat him. I fought the bear – beat him. The Lord

delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear, and the Lord will deliver me from this Philistine.” Saul said, “Beautiful. You’re the man. Go. But before you go, you should probably take my armor – top of the line – newest technology.” David tried it on. He said, “I can’t even walk in this stuff.” David made the right decision. He said, “God has called me into this battle using the tools with which He has already equipped me.” That happened to be a shepherd staff and a sling.

We’re going to look at three things. We’re going to look at Goliath’s disdain or Goliath’s disgust. The second thing we’re going to look at is David’s faith, and the third thing we’re going to look at is God’s purpose in this whole long story.

What’s Goliath’s disgust? Let me read it to you.

*<sup>41</sup> And the Philistine moved forward and came near to David, with his shield-bearer in front of him. <sup>42</sup> And when the Philistine looked and saw David, he disdained him, for he was but a youth, ruddy and handsome in appearance. <sup>43</sup> And the Philistine said to David, “Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?” . . . (ESV)*

When Goliath is speaking it’s almost like the narrator has been able to slow him way down as if he were just a big lumbering giant. The Bible says, “He came near to David with his shield bearer. When the Philistine looked and saw David, he disdained him.” Why? Because in that moment Goliath knew, “There is no way I can win. There’s no way I can win this situation – at least psychologically.” What do I mean by that? Goliath was a military man and no matter what happened out on that battlefield he had to go back and listen to the criticism and the trash talking of all the rest of the Philistine army. I imagine three different scenarios. The first thing that they would trash talk and criticize him about is, “Hey, Goliath. Look who they sent out against you. They sent a boy!” He can’t win. They sent out a boy so the Philistine army had to be laughing, not at Israel, but at Goliath. They think he’s an idiot. They don’t think he can do anything so they send a boy. The other side of that, however, is when and if they fight what if Goliath totally crushes this sixteen-year-old boy? What are his friends in the Philistine army going to say then? “Oh, ho. That was really tough, Goliath. Let’s send you another one. Think you can handle two?” Or, if he totally crushed David, their sense of honor would show. They would say, “You know Goliath, you didn’t have to just crush the kid. He’s just a kid.” Goliath couldn’t win. Of course, if he lost he would not have won. He would have lost. But there’s something else going on here as well. When Goliath walked out he knew that there’s no way he could win this, from one perspective. On the other hand, as soon as Goliath opened his mouth David knew and we know that there is no way he can win it. This is the climax and the culmination of the whole story. You could stop here and it would be over. In fact everything after this is gravy. How do we know and how would David have known that the jig is up as soon as Goliath opens his mouth? Let me read it to you.

*<sup>43</sup> And the Philistine said to David, “Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?” And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. <sup>44</sup> The Philistine said to David, “Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and to the beasts of the field.” (ESV)*

So the first thing Goliath says is in reference to their weaponry. “Am I a dog that you would come with me with sticks?” Remember all that David has is his shepherd’s crook and his slingshot. But that isn’t how you know he’s going to lose. You know how he’s going to lose by what he says next. It says, “And Goliath cursed David by his gods.” That’s Goliath’s gods, probably Dagon and Ashtoreth. First of all we know from earlier in this book that God has already defeated Dagon, over and over. But, bigger than that, what does God promise to His blessing bearer? What does God promise to His anointed? When God first called Abraham, His first blessing bearer, his first anointed, to him and all those who would bear the blessing after him, all of Abraham’s descendents. He says, “Abraham (among other things) I will bless who you bless and I will curse whom you curse.” Here Goliath has cursed God’s anointed. It’s over. He’s blasphemed.

You know one of the ironies of this whole text? It’s actually laughable. Do you know what the Old Testament penalty for blasphemy and cursing someone was? Leviticus 24 verse 16 tell us it was stoning. Think about that for a minute. The penalty for blasphemy and for defying God was to be stoned, and Goliath would learn that in short order. So he had cursed David, God’s anointed, and by doing so he would bring the curse of God down upon him. Then the last thing he does is to try to intimidate David. It would be typical Ancient Near Eastern trash talking. The worst thing that could happen to you if you were a Hebrew soldier would be for someone to defile your body, or to deny you a proper burial. It’s the same today for soldiers that are Muslim or Israeli. Goliath says, “Here’s what I’m going to do to you, boy. I’m going to take your body and I’m going to feed your flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field.” If David wasn’t afraid by this point, this is probably a good time. As I was reading this, I thought how easy it is to ask the question of faith when you’re in a meeting and say, “Hey, we ought to do this and do that.” It’s quite another thing when the rubber meets the road. Again, when I was in the Army, I was in a HALO school, which is free-fall parachuting. At the first jump I’ll never forget how many guys

walked to the edge of the plane and said, “Neh. I’m good.” They didn’t jump! They didn’t have to. It was all volunteer. This is the point where David could have walked out into the valley and said, “[whistle] He actually is really big from this close! I didn’t really think about that. I saw him from the hill before, looking down and it just seemed different.” Yet David has done something amazing here as we look at his faith. I mentioned in this context before that I’m constantly telling the elders, “You ought be thinking up BHAGs for our church.” What’s a BHAG? It’s a Big Hairy Audacious Goal – it’s something big. David has upped the argument a notch because he’s proposing what I’m going to call a CHAG – a Crazy Hairy Audacious Goal, or an Insane Hairy Audacious Goal. What David says when he opens his mouth shows us utter faith.

<sup>45</sup> *Then David said to the Philistine, “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. <sup>46</sup> 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 . . .*

So David, in a way mirrors what Goliath has said. Goliath mentioned weaponry first and David does the same thing. He says, “You come to me with sword and with spear, but I come to you in the name of the living God whom you have defied.” That’s pretty big. Your weaponry: sword and spear. My weaponry: the God of heaven and earth.

On one hand, David, at this point, might still have had quite a bit of confidence in himself. David had to have known he was good with a slingshot. He had to be thinking to himself, “You know, this guy, he is big but the bigger they are, the bigger the target and I’ve hit smaller stuff than that, so from this far away I’m sure I can take this guy out with a slingshot. No problem.” And he could even be very humble about it. “It was the Lord who has gifted me with the ability to use the slingshot. It’s the Lord who gave me the slingshot. The Lord delivered me from the lion.” He could have been very humble, and yet still had a lot of confidence in himself. But what he says next shows us his faith in two steps. The first thing is just the irony. Remember Goliath said, “I’m going to give your body to the beasts of the field.” The first thing that David said that takes quite a bit of hutzpah for a boy to say to a giant is, “Here’s what’s going to happen. I am going to kill you and then I’m going to cut off your head with your own sword.” That’s trash talking. I don’t care what you say. “I’m not just going to kill you, but I’m actually to humiliate you. I’m going to cut your head off with your own sword.” Even bigger than that, here’s where the CHAG comes in or the IHAG. It’s bigger than a BHAG. Remember Goliath said, “I’m going to give your body to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field?” Did you see what David said? David doesn’t say, “Oh yeah? Well I’m going to give your body to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field.” David says, “I’m going to give the bodies of the whole Philistine army to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field.” That is how you know that David is acting by faith because with his slingshot he probably had the confidence, I would think, that he could take out one guy. On the other hand he was not crazy enough to know that with that sling shot and five stones that he could take out the whole Philistine army. But David’s faith was such that because God was on his side the whole army would be taken down by his faith. That is a BHAG or CHAG. That’s a big one.

What is the purpose of all of this? From a ground level it just seems that that’s what people do. Philistines fight Israelites. Sometimes they win, sometimes they lose. But there’s a cosmic reason for this battle, and there’s a cosmic reason for every battle that you and I ever go through. What is God’s purpose behind this battle between David and Goliath? Let me just mention it is the same purpose for every fight and battle that you and I go through. David tells us what the purpose is. The purpose of this fight between David and Goliath is evangelism. If you’re not familiar with church and church lingo, evangelism simply means the proclamation of the good news of what God has done on our behalf. It is evangelism that is focused toward two groups of people, those outside the church and those inside the church; those outside of God’s covenant and those inside of God’s covenant. Let me tell you what I mean. I’ve asked some of you this before in small groups. “Why did David fight Goliath?” Everyone grapples. David tells us right here. Let me read it.

<sup>46</sup> *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, <sup>47</sup> and that all this assembly may know that the LORD saves not with sword and spear . . . (ESV)*

So there’s one fight, one event with two applications. What’s the first application? David basically says, “I’m going to whip you. I, a sixteen-year-old boy, am going to kill and humiliate you and your whole army so that the world may know that there is a God in Israel.” On the other hand, you can almost imagine David with his back to the Israelites, turning around. “I’m also doing it so that this assembly will know that God does not save by sword or by spear.” One event, two applications. One is that the world might know that there is a God in Israel, and the second is that God does not save by sword and by spear. A lot of times if you’re a Christian you think that, “I don’t need to hear the Gospel anymore. What I need to know is what the right things are to do.” That’s why you’re so miserable.

There's another battle that took place in the Bible. It actually took place with David's greatest descendent. That great descendant's name was Jesus. It was a battle that was fought on the cross. At the cross Jesus bore the sins of all of those who would trust in Him, and in that one event, two applications are going on. That event happened so that the world may know that there is a God not only in Israel now, but also for all nations, a God who is willing to save whosoever would come unto Him. On the other hand, at the cross those of you who have trusted Jesus, who are Christian, get the message, "Look to the cross any time you feel like you are not acceptable to God or you need to work for your salvation, because what you see there is that God does not save by sword or by spear." God does not save by a good performance review. God does not save because you've been a good mother or a good father or poor mother or poor father. The reason that God saves you is because of the work of His Son. There was one person who represented Israel against Goliath. At the very risk of his life and he risked everything in order to defeat Israel's enemy. It's his greater son, Jesus that didn't face our greatest enemy, sin, at the risk of His life but He faced our greatest enemy at the loss of His life. Jesus said, "The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep." The greater message here, I think, for a church like ours is the second part. Do you believe that? Do you believe that God doesn't save by sword or by spear or by any of your good works? Do you believe that Jesus has saved you by grace alone, by faith alone? If you do, the first part of that takes care of itself. You can't help but tell other people. It changes everything.

There's a bit of irony at the end of this text that I'll read to you. The story is over now. How could you climax after this? Well, you've got to go ahead and get the killing done. David does that but it happens so quickly you could almost blink and miss it. Let me read that part to you.

<sup>48</sup> *When the Philistine arose and came and drew near to meet David, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine.* <sup>49</sup> *And David put his hand in his bag and took out a stone and slung it and struck the Philistine on his forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell on his face to the ground. (ESV)*

Boom. It's over. Then verse 50 is the commentary.

<sup>50</sup> *So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and struck the Philistine and killed him. (And here's one of those editorial comments.) There was no sword in the hand of David.* <sup>51</sup> *Then David ran and stood over the Philistine and took his sword and drew it out of its sheath and killed him and cut off his head with it. When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled. (ESV)*

So David kills Goliath here twice. At least that's what the text says. Actually the stone killed him. Why does it say he killed him again? It's basically for the sake of the Philistines. "If any of you boys were wondering whether or not he's really dead . . ." He pulls out Goliath's sword and beheads him with his own sword. Now, what's the message of the Gospel there? It's a big one. Jesus did the same thing. Jesus beheaded our enemy with its own sword. Jesus destroyed our sin by becoming our sin. Jesus destroyed those who would slander and accuse us and cause us to be guilty by bearing the slander and the accusation and the guilt on Himself. Satan had to rejoice and say, "Look at that. We killed Him. We finally ended this whole thing." And through their killing Him it was actually their own undoing. Jesus defeated our enemy with his own weapon. Not by using, it but by bearing it. Think about that.