

FACING THE GIANTS

1 Samuel 17

The story of David's battle with Goliath is one of the most intriguing events in the entire Bible. A teenage shepherd boy about 15 or 16 slays a giant. That's the kind of stuff that a children's Sunday School teacher absolutely captivates her class with. And the great lesson that we all learn from David's victory is that with the power of God in our life we can do anything. One of my all time favorite movies is Facing the Giants. It is about a high school football team that turned their season around after a bad start and wound up winning the state championship, beating a team the title game that was a whole lot stronger and a whole lot faster, all because their coach taught them to believe that God could do anything.

Well, friends, the God that created this universe can do anything, and He can enable you to anything. But there is so much more to the story of David and Goliath than that. It is a picture of a spiritual struggle that is going on this very moment all over the world, even in this very room. And today I want us to understand this struggle. And I want us to prepare ourselves to win the struggle and lead many others to win their struggle as well.

Turn in your Bibles, please to 1 Sam. 17: 1-11. The nation of Israel was God's chosen people, just as it still is today. The Philistines were Israel's neighbors to the west and had been their enemies for years. They were worshippers of heathen gods and they were continually causing Israel great harm. And in verse 1&2 we see that the Philistines had invaded the region of Israel called Judah and had forced Israel to send their troops out to meet them in battle. And I want us to stop here and see the first truth God would have us to learn from this Scripture. And the truth is, **there is a very real, invisible spiritual war going on constantly all around us, a war between the kingdom of God and the**

kingdom of darkness. Now, the Philistines are a type of, that is, they represent the kingdom of darkness. And the kingdom of darkness has a king, and this king is represented by the most ferocious warrior in the Philistine army, a giant named Goliath. Israel, on the other hand, is a type of the Kingdom of God. Jesus speaks much about the Kingdom of God. And the Bible teaches that one day the Kingdom of God, which is now spiritual, will become a literal Kingdom and Jesus will reign in that Kingdom for evermore. But in the present time the spiritual war between these two kingdoms rages on.

But if Goliath represents the king of the kingdom of darkness, then just who is this king? The king of the kingdom of darkness is none other than Satan himself, also known as the devil. And one reason Goliath represented Satan because he was so very large. Let me try to put Goliath's size in perspective. According to a Univ. of Alabama football roster that I checked this week, the Crimson Tide's largest player this year is 6'6" OL Brandon Hill. Brandon's mama sure must have fed him a lot of peas and cornbread and chocolate cake. For on weigh-in day he tipped the scale at 385. How'd you defensive linemen like trying to hold your rushing lane against that bad boy? Well, that would be better than lining up against Goliath. Brandon Hill is 6'6", but Goliath was about 9'9". Now, the Bible doesn't say how much Goliath weighed, but he was so strong that his armor weighed 125 pounds and his spear weighed over 30 pounds.

But Goliath was not just big, Goliath was ferocious. When David went out to meet him Goliath in battle the Bible says that Goliath cursed him by his gods. And in verse 44 Goliath sneered at David and said, 'Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field!'" Goliath was a mean dude. And that's another reason Goliath is a picture of the devil. The Bible tells us in 1 Peter 5:8 that the devil is as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

Now, according to recent surveys most people do not believe in a spiritual being called Satan. Rather, they say that Satan is only a symbol of evil. But friends, let me tell you, the Satan is no bogus boogie man, no sinister Santa Clause, no make-believe monster. The devil is as real as his kingdom is real. Jesus told His disciples that He witnessed Satan being kicked out of Heaven. We read in Matthew, Mark, and Luke where Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness and that Jesus rebuked him and commanded him to flee. And Jesus said in the book of John that Satan is a murderer from the beginning and the father of lies (John 8:44). So friends, don't ever make light of the devil. For the devil is real just as God is real. And the devil is out to destroy you, every single one of you, me as well. There's hardly a week that passes that we don't read or hear on news about a college football player that's gotten himself in trouble with the law and gotten kicked off his team. And we all think, "How could he have been so stupid?" I'll tell you. He was under the sway of the enemy of his soul, the devil.

But the devil is out not only to destroy us as individuals but he's also out to destroy the church of Jesus Christ. Hardly a week goes by that we do not hear of some pastor who has had a moral failure or of some form of discrimination against Christians in the workplace or in school or by the media. A few months ago when an NBA player declared that he was gay, ESPN commentator Chris Broussard, who is a Christian, was just about crucified for daring to say that homosexuality was a sin. And that's because Satan is trying to silence every voice that stands up against sin. And Satan would love to see our Congress vote to legalize gay marriage nationwide and make it a hate crime for any preacher to preach against homosexuality. Friends, Satan is out to destroy us at best or at least destroy our witness for Christ.

Well, when Goliath came out to challenge someone in Israel's army to a fight to the death, all of them, from the king to the rawest

recruit, shook in their boots like a bowl full of jell-o. And you might have thought differently about some of them. Take for instance Saul. Saul was the king. He stood head and shoulders taller than any man in his army (1 Sam. 9:2). He was a mighty military leader that led Israel in some great victories in battle. But he dared not fight Goliath. Saul's son Jonathan and his armor bearer had previously killed 20 Philistines all by themselves, but Jonathan passed on Goliath, too. And so did Abner, the captain of the Israelite army, whom the Bible says was a "valiant man". But he wasn't valiant enough to take on the giant. Nor was anyone else. The army of God was just like the leaders of Israel in the days of Ezekiel, when God said, "So I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap.....but I found none". And so for forty days, twice a day, Goliath mocked all Israel with his taunts, and mocked the God of Israel as well.

But the Bible says, "Be not deceived, God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, that will he also reap" (Gal. 6:7), and Goliath was about to reap what he sowed. But it would come in the most unusual way. Look with me to 1 Sam. 17: 12-14, 17, 22. David was the youngest brother of three of the soldiers in Saul's army, and David's father, Jesse, sent David to the battle front, which was about 12 miles away, to check in on his brothers and take them some food. And it just so happened that about the time he got there Goliath appeared to terrorize Israel one more time. And David could not believe his ears. He could not believe that anyone would dare speak such words against the God of Israel, no matter how big they were. And he was furious, and he said in verse 26, "For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" And David made up his mind then and there that he was going to kill Goliath.

Now, for the sake of time I want us to fast forward to v. 48 and see how he did it. Follow with me as I read verse 48-53. And so ends the story of one of the greatest victories of Israel of all time.

And it all came about when a teenage kid did the impossible by slaying a mighty giant.

So at this point we must stop and ask the question, “How could this be? How could a boy about the age of most of you 10th or 11th graders have the courage to march out on the battlefield and go head-to-head with a giant that stood almost 10 feet tall?” Well, here is how, and I pray that you will listen carefully, for it is so very simple. David’s heart was totally, and I mean **totally**, surrendered to God. Listen to what God says in 2 Chron. 16:9, “For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of *those* whose heart *is* loyal to Him”. Here’s how the Holman Christian Standard Bible reads, “For the eyes of Yahweh roam throughout the earth to show Himself strong for those whose hearts are completely His”.

You see, friends, age has nothing to do with whether or not the power of God is on your life, nor does your status in your family or in your community. And that was a good thing for David, for in Jewish culture being the youngest of eight sons gave him a low standing in both. In fact, when the prophet Samuel came to anoint one of Jesse’s sons as the next king of Israel, Jesse had all seven of his other sons to pass before Samuel one by one to be anointed, but each time God told Samuel, “Not this one”. And after that last one was rejected Samuel asked Jesse, “Do you have any more sons?” And Jesse said, “I’ve got one more, the youngest, but he’s out keeping the sheep”. It never crossed Jesse’s mind that little David would be Israel’s next king. But age and family status has nothing to do with God’s power upon your life. But it has everything to do with your passion to know God and for God to be glorified in your life.

And this was certainly the case with David. 1 Sam. 13:14 says that David was a man after God’s own heart, that is, David’s heartbeat was the same as God’s. David’s purpose in life was to bring God’s righteousness to reign and God’s name to be exalted

in all things. And verse 14 goes on to say that because of his passionate heart for God, God sought out David to replace Saul as the king of Israel. I ask you, what in this world is greater than that? Than for God to be seeking out someone to do a mighty work for Him and you be the one that He finds! And whether you are a teenager like David or an 80 year old like Moses, that should be the highest goal of every Christian.

I have a new hero. And I must admit that for me it is an unlikely hero. That's because he is a New York Yankee. I can't hate the Yankees because I'm a Christian, but I can strongly dislike the Yankees, and I do strongly dislike the Yankees. But Mariano Rivera is my hero. If you are a baseball fan of any stripe you've gotta respect Mariano Rivera. He is the oldest active player in the major leagues at 43. He has spent all of his 19 years in the big leagues as a relief pitcher with the Yankees. He has five World Championship rings and holds the major league record with 645 saves and counting. He announced his retirement in March, but he is not coasting out. This year he has the third most appearances on the team with the second lowest earned run average. And in July he was the all-star game MVP. He is a shoe-in for the Hall of Fame.

But listen to what Mariano's thoughts are about where he is in life and what he's accomplished. I quote, "God has put me in a special place to talk about Him. It really has nothing to do with baseball. I'm here to talk about Him. Him alone." And when Mariano retires he plans to begin working in an evangelical ministry in his native Panama, telling people about Jesus. Friends, may God give us more Mariano Riveras. He is a true giant killer!

Do you want to be a giant killer, like David, like Mariano Rivera? And I'm not talking about winning state championships or World Series rings. I'm not even talking about whipping cancer or laying down the cigarettes once and for all. I'm talking about

going out and killing giants in battles that really matter. Battles in the spiritual war between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. Battles where your friend's freedom from drug addiction is at stake. Will drugs destroy him or will Jesus deliver Him? Battles where your family's preservation is at stake. Will we stay together or will we split up? Battles where the souls of your brothers and sisters or the souls of your children are at stake. Will they go heaven or will they go to hell? Well, if you want God to use you to kill a giant in the battles that really matter, God says from His Word that they are five things that you need to consider. I want us to look at each one briefly.

The first thing that you need to know about giant killers is, **giant killers are prepared**. When they go out to battle they are confident that they are ready. When king Saul found out that David wanted to do battle with Goliath he tried to dissuade him. "You're just a youth, and he's a man of war from his youth", Saul said. But look at David's response to Saul in verse 34-36. David was no amateur when it came to fighting. He had already fought a lion and a bear while tending sheep, and to tell you the truth, standing up to a hungry lion or bear would be just about as dangerous as facing a giant. But David had killed both with his bare hands. And friends, David did not do that with teenage strength. He did it with the power of God. But what I want you to see was that David was prepared.

But if you would slay giants you must prepare yourself, too. You must learn all that you can about your enemy. Paul said of Satan in 2 Cor. 2:11, "...for we are not ignorant of his devices". But you must also become a learner at the feet of Jesus, learning of Him and His ways through His Word. Crying out to Him for His cleansing from sin and then for His anointing, for He said, "Without Me you can do nothing" (Jn. 15:5). Years ago an old saint of God wrote, "We are not called to work for Him, but to let Him work through us". And how true that is! And how much can we

accomplish if we do this? The apostle Paul said, “I can do **all things** through Christ Who strengthens me” (Phil. 4:13). That includes killing giants. But we must be prepared.

But giant killers are not only **prepared**, they are **patient**. Back in ch. 16 we read the account of Samuel anointing David as the future king of Israel. And verse 13 says that from that day forward the Spirit of God came upon him. Think about that. Day by day, every day, teenager David walked in the sweet presence and the power of God. But do you know what was he doing during that time? He was back out on the hillside tending sheep, patiently waiting, and preparing, for the day that God would begin to move him towards the throne.

And that day came without David lifting one finger to make it happen. Saul had fallen away from God and was being tormented by an evil spirit. Someone suggested that he find someone who could play soothing music for him when the evil spirit began to torment him. And Saul agreed to the plan. Now, look at 16:18-19. And Jesse did send David to minister to Saul, and that opened the door for his ascent to the throne. But notice again what Saul’s servant said to him about David in verse 18, “I have seen the son of Jesse...” He had observed the character and conduct of David as he patiently, faithfully went about doing the mundane duties of life. He had observed David’s skill in playing his harp, skill because he had practiced out there in the fields, playing to no one but God and his sheep. And God rewarded his patience and faithfulness.

Friends, about 1000 years after David, Jesus said, “He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much” (Luke 16:10). That’s a great lesson for football, but it is an indispensable lesson for giant killing. If you would make an impact for God, don’t kick any door open yourself. Be patient and let God open the doors, and if you are faithful God will open the doors, at just the right time. And when God opens a door you can be sure it will never

slam shut in your face, and you'll walk through safely to kill your giant.

There is a third truth about giant slayers we see modeled in David's life. Giant killers are not only **prepared** and **patient**, but they are also **put down**. When David arrived at the camp, found out what was going on, and then said that he wanted to fight Goliath, he was met with discouragement on every hand. His oldest brother ridiculed him for coming to the battle front just to be entertained (verse 28). Saul told him that he was just a youth and didn't stand a chance (verse 33). And Goliath pronounced to him that he would feed his flesh to the birds and the beasts (verse 44). Nobody believed in David except David. And you can be sure that if you believe that God is calling you to slay a giant that you'll have many who tell you that you can't do it, too.

Adrian Rogers was one of the greatest preachers of his generation. He was the pastor of the one of the largest churches in the nation, the Belview Baptist Church in Memphis, for about 30 years, and he died about six years ago. No one was more respected in the Southern Baptist Convention than Adrian Rogers. He was a great preacher, but more than that he was a great leader and defender of the faith. And I remember years ago Dr. Rogers telling the story of a conversation that he overheard between his dad and another relative. Not knowing that Adrian was listening, his dad told this relative that Adrian had said that he was called to preach, but his dad told the other man that he just didn't think that he had it in him. And Dr. Rogers said that his heart was broken in a million pieces. But he did not let those discouraging words stop him. And Dr. Rogers went on to slay many, many giants in his long ministry.

Beloved, when God calls you to slay a giant, do not for a moment listen to the demons of discouragement, seeking you to forsake your call. Expect their voices, for you will hear them loud and clear. But rebuke them in the name of Jesus. For if God calls

you God will empower you, and your discouragers will watch you slay Goliath and hang their heads in shame.

We have seen how David was **prepared** to kill Goliath, and that he was **patient** until God's timing was perfect, and that he was also **put down** by the naysayers. And now I want us to look at the last description of a giant killer, and this one is the most important. In fact, if this character trait is not in place you can throw out the rest of them, for you'll never kill a giant. It all starts with this one. And that is, David was **pardoned**. He was forgiven from all of his sins, he was a child of God and he was right with God.

I want you to look back at verse 20. This is an interesting verse. It says that David arrived in camp just as the army was going out to fight and that they were shouting for the battle. What a joke. What a sham. They were no more going out to fight than they had been for the last forty days, when they had been fleeing Goliath's presence like a mouse running from a hungry cat. And they were no more shouting for the battle, which means shouting "Charge!" and meaning it, than a high school football team playing the Pittsburgh Steelers. Some were children of God with no faith and no power in their lives, but some did not even belong to God. They might have claimed to be gladiators for God, but they were all hypocrites, play actors, everyone of them but David.

Friends, there's a whole lot of people in the world just like the army of Israel. If you ask them if they are in the army of God they'd say, "Sure! Charge! But listen, I'm no general, I'm just a buck private". But the fact is they're not one of God's soldiers at all. They are not Christians. They're wearing their homemade "Christian" uniform as best as they can. They go to church, if they're athletes they don't break training rules, if they are husbands they don't cheat on their wives, if they are wives they don't nag their husbands, if they're students they don't cheat on their tests. But they've never been pardoned from their sins. And

they'll never whip a giant. And when they die they will go to hell. So the ultimate question is, how does anyone **make sure** that they are the real deal, that they are a **true Christian**, that **God is in their life**, and that they **will go to Heaven** when they die?

Well, friends, it is as simple as A B C. And **A** stands for "agree". If you would become a Christian, if you would be saved, you must agree with God about where you stand with Him. Even though God loves you with an infinite love, God declares that you have broken His laws in the Bible and that you are separated from Him. He says, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). And furthermore, you must agree with God about the consequences of your sins. God say in the Bible, "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23), meaning eternal punishment in hell. And to be saved you cannot argue with God on these points. "Yes, Lord, I agree. I have sinned, and my sins condemn me to eternal death. I'm hopeless without Your help".

Now, that's the bad part, but the rest is the good part. **B** stands for "believe". The Bible says in Rom. 5:8, "But God demonstrated His own love for us in this, that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us". And to become a Christian you must believe, "Jesus Christ really does love me and He really died in my place on the cross. He took my sins upon Himself and paid for everyone of them with His own blood, and then arose from the grave". And friends, He does love you today, and the cross is irrefutable proof that He loves you. And God the Father loved you with an infinite love in order to send His only precious Son to die for you. Friends, there is no greater truth in all of the world! So if you've never believed it before, believe it today and rejoice!

There is one more element in becoming a Christian. **C** stand for "confess". The Bible says, "If you will confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Rom. 10:9). To confess the Lord Jesus means that you believe that Jesus Christ is God's only

remedy for the sins of men. You believe Jesus when He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but by Me" (Jn. 14:6). And believing that, you sincerely turn from your sins and ask Jesus to take them away and to take complete control of your life, and to give you strength to live holy and godly each day, and you trust Him alone to take you to heaven when you die. It is nothing less than a total commitment of your life into the hands of Jesus, for Him to save you, keep you, and be the ruler of your life. But the moment you make that commitment you are pardoned from every sin and become a true child of God. Would you please bow your heads?

Today God may be speaking to some of you about becoming a Christian, about being saved. You've understood today that you are a sinner, that you are condemned because of your sins, and that more than anything in this world you need forgiveness. And you do believe that Jesus Christ is the only One Who can forgive you, because He died on the cross, paying for your sins, and then He arose from the grave. And today you know that God is calling you to receive Christ as your Savior and Lord. And if today you would like to respond to Jesus' call to save you and make you His child, while no one is looking, I'd like to ask you to stand.