

Defeating Life's Giants (I Samuel 17:1-58)

- I. The conflict between Israel and Goliath.
 - A. We are back to a narrative or historical genre, so we can expect to read about literal events.

Question: What can we learn about Israel's struggle with Goliath? Why were Saul and all of the Israeli army afraid?

- B. Introduction
 1. Giants come in the form of daily struggles.
 2. Giants defy our stand for God.
 3. Giants may leave us shaking in our shoes.
 4. Giant slayers suffer ridicule from friends and enemies
 5. Giant slayers act in faith with full assurance despite apparent weakness.
- C. Verses 1-4 set the battle scene and tell us that Goliath was six cubits tall. How big or how long was a cubit?
 1. The cubit of a man or common cubit (see Deuteronomy 3:11) probably between 16 and 18 inches (International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, volume 2).
 2. The legal or sanctuary cubit (see Ezekiel 40:5) was probably about 20.6 inches (ibid).
 3. John 8:31-32 says, "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."
 4. The word "giant" in the Bible does not always mean physically big. In Genesis 6:4, the giants were probably not physically big people.
 - a. Genesis 6:4 (KJV) says, "There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown."
 - b. Genesis 6:4 (NIV) says, "The Nephilim were on the earth in those days--and also afterward--when the sons of God went to the daughters of men and had children by them. They were the heroes of old, men of renown."
 - c. The Hebrew word (*n@phiyl*) means the Nephilim, which is the way that the NIV translates the word "giant".
 - 1) According to the Easton's Bible Dictionary, the Nephilim were violent tyrants and exceedingly wicked.
 - 2) According to Dr. John H. Sailhamer ("Genesis", The Expositor's Bible Commentary), the existence of the Nephilim in Genesis 6:4 and again in Numbers 13:33 presents a serious technical problem.
 - a) According to Genesis 6:4, the Nephilim were in the land before the flood. But if they were destroyed in the Flood, how could their descendants have been in the land after the Flood?

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- b) His answer is that Numbers 13:33, which specifically speaks of the Nephilim, does not appear in the LXX (Septuagint) and may not have been in the original text.
 - c) The Easton's Bible Dictionary simply says that the Anakites took the Nephilim name as a form of cult or idol worship.
 - d) **The important thing is that the omission of Numbers 13:33 from the LXX does not change any biblical truths.** If the Anakites simply named themselves after the Nephilim, then that does not change Bible truth either.
- d. Some important notes about the Word of God, the KJV, and the NIV
- 1) The KJV and NIV are not the actual Word of God.
 - a) The original Old Testament was written in Hebrew.
 - b) The Book of Daniel was written in Aramaic.
 - c) The New Testament was written in Greek.
 - 2) The LXX is a Greek version of the Old Testament that the Hebrew fathers wrote after Alexander the Great had conquered the known world.
 - 3) The KJV and the NIV are English translations of copies of copies of copies of numerous copies of the originally transmitted Word of God.
 - 4) **The original manuscripts do not exist. No one has the actual manuscripts that were written by Moses, David, or any of the others.**
 - 5) However, we can have total confidence in the copies.
 - a) We understand the elaborate copying procedures used by the monks that made the copies.
 - b) We have the proof of the Dead Sea scrolls, which were discovered around 1948.
 - c) The Dead Sea scrolls date to about 200 BC to 100 BC. The next earliest copy that is currently held dates to about 900 AD. The two sets of manuscripts are about 1100 or 1200 years apart in time, **but they are almost identical.** There are no doctrinal contradictions or differences between the two versions that should cause anyone concern.
 - 6) The KJV was produced around 1525 AD from the manuscripts that dated to 900 AD.
 - 7) The NIV was produced largely from the Dead Sea scrolls, which are much closer in time to the original writings. The last Old Testament book, Malachi, was written about 400 BC. So, we are within 200-300 of the original.
5. Notice also Numbers 13:26-33.
- a. Dr. Ronald B. Allen ("Numbers", The Expositor's Bible Commentary) identified the grapes as wine grapes.

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- b. He suggested that they would have been an indication of the good life that Israel could have had in that land. In that case, the reference to their great size may have been more symbolic than actual (in other words, hyperbole or exaggeration).
 - c. But the Jews were terrified of the "great" men or very large men that the spies had seen.
6. Was Goliath a real giant? He is called a champion (*'iysh*), not a giant.
- a. The best evidence suggests that the term "giants" used in Genesis 6:4 and Numbers 13:33 referred to their violent nature rather than their physical size.
 - b. Josephus, in his Antiquities, listed Goliath as five cubits and a span (over 7-1/2 feet tall).
 - c. According to the LXX and MSS, his height was four cubits and a span (over 6 feet tall).
 - d. According to Dr. Ronald F. Youngblood ("I and II Samuel", The Expositor's Bible Commentary), Goliath may well have been over 9-feet tall.
 - 1) Deuteronomy 3:11 identifies the king of Bashan as having a bed that was more than 13-feet long.
 - 2) I Chronicles 11:23 mentions an Egyptian that was more than 7-1/2 feet tall.
 - 3) On 7/15/1940, Ronald Pershing Wadlow died. He was listed as 8'11" tall.
 - 4) ***Leonid Stadnik, advertised on AOL (3/24/08) as the world's tallest man, is 8 feet, 5 inches tall. He is from the Ukraine.***
7. The children of Israel were intimidated by the Anakites in the same way that Israel was intimidated by Goliath.
- D. I appreciate the Sunday School Quarterly's focus on big challenges that we face in life rather than the physical bigness of the man that David battled.
- 1. Concerning Goliath, your enemies always seem larger when you do not feel confident with the Lord.
 - a. That was Saul's problem more than Goliath's size.
 - b. Sin will cause a person to lose your confidence with the Lord.

Question: How does sin cause a person to lose confidence with the Lord? How does sin cause us to lose our focus? What is sin?

- 2. The obvious answer to the question, What is sin, is that it is anything that causes a person to lose confidence with the Lord or to lose our focus on doing what He would have us do.

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3. The real significance of Numbers 13 is that ten men made all the others afraid, while two men (Joshua and Caleb) clearly were not.
 4. The real significance of I Samuel 17 is not the size of Goliath. It is that Saul, Israel's army, and even David's brothers were afraid of Goliath, while David clearly was not.
 - E. Verses 5-7 describe the difficulty of Israel's challenge against Goliath. He was so big and so mighty that the Philistines could sit back and rely on him.
 1. He had a brass helmet on his head.
 2. He had a coat of mail (*gasgeseth* - scale (of fish or water animals)) that weighed five thousand shekels (*sheqel* - the chief unit of weight or measure) of brass (*n@chosheth* - copper (ore), bronze (as copper alloy)). The NIV Bible simply says that he "wore a coat of scale armor of bronze weighing five thousand shekels."
 3. He had brass greaves (*mitschah* - leg armor) upon his legs and a target (*kiydown* - a piece of armor for the throat) of brass between his shoulders.
 4. The head on his spear weighed six hundred shekels and was made of iron. **He was big, and he was strong.**
 - F. Verses 8-11 show that Goliath was very intimidating.
 1. He challenged Israel to fight him.
 2. Saul was very afraid, but not just afraid. He was greatly afraid.
- II. Jesse had eight sons. His three oldest (Eliab, Abinadab, and Shammah) were with Saul, and his youngest was David.
- A. In verses 15-25, David left and returned
 1. David was back in Bethlehem caring for his father's sheep while the three oldest brothers were involved in the battle in the valley of Elah.
 2. Jesse told David to take provisions to his brothers.
 3. While he was there, Goliath came out and made his threats.
 4. In verse 25, some of the men in the army tell David that the man that kills Goliath will be treated very well.
 - a. He will be given riches.
 - b. He will be given Saul's daughter for his wife.
 - c. His family will be free in Israel.
 - d. David was interested.
 - B. In verses 26-33
 1. In verse 26, David seemed to have an interest in what he would get out of the deal as well as a desire to silence Goliath to take away the reproach on Israel.
 2. In verse 28, David's oldest brother chastised and belittled David.
 - a. He said that David had a big ego (pride)
 - b. He implied that David had only come to observe the conflict, probably in the same fashion that someone might observe a sporting contest.

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- c. He belittled him by stating that David's only responsibility was to watch over a "few" sheep.

Question: I Timothy 3:2-3 says, "A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, ***not greedy of filthy lucre***; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous." Do you think David was wrong to ask what was in it for him? Was Eliab correct about David?

3. David defended himself against his brother's accusations and eventually ended up talking to Saul.
- C. In verses 34-40, David prepared for battle.
1. David showed that he was prepared for the task.
 - a. Goliath was a mighty foe, but the Lord had been preparing David for such a challenge.
 - b. The Lord always prepares us for those things that He wants us to do. He gives us spiritual gifts, and He nurtures us as we grow and mature in Him (read John 15:1-2).
 - c. We are weak, sinful human beings. **But when we have a personal relationship with the Lord, then we can do whatever He wants us to do.**
 2. David had ignored his oldest brother's taunts, and he had ignored Saul's doubts. He clearly had confidence that the Lord would deliver him.
 3. In verses 34-36, David convinced Saul that he was the right one for the job. Of course, Saul probably did not need much convincing.
 4. David would not take Saul's armor because he had not proved or tested it.
 5. He only took his staff, five smooth stones, and a sling shot, but that was actually four stones and a staff more than he needed.
- D. In verses 41-47, David promised a resounding victory for the Lord, and it came to pass. His words were the words, and his faith was the faith that brought victory over the mighty Philistine giant.
1. In verse 45, he said, "**I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts**, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied."
 2. In verse 46, he said, "**This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand**; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; **that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.**"
 3. I Samuel 17:47 says, "**And all this assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the LORD'S**, and he will give you into our hands."

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- E. Sin causes a person to lose confidence before the Lord. Sin brought down Saul, and faith gave David the victory.
 - 1. As the chapter ended, Israel won a great victory over the Philistines.
 - 2. **And Saul started to become suspicious of David.**

III. Conclusion: Why did David prevail against Goliath and Saul hide from his enemy?

- A. David had:
 - 1. The right relationship with the Lord
 - 2. The right attitude
 - 3. The right preparation
 - 4. The right desire
- B. Saul had:
 - 1. The wrong relationship with the Lord
 - 2. The wrong attitude
 - 3. The wrong preparation
 - 4. The wrong desire
- C. It is sad that Saul made so many bad decisions.
- D. Was the deck stacked against Saul? Was he predestined to fail?

IV. Next week's lesson: Always Faithful (I Samuel 18-20)