

## David and the Dwarf

### 1 Samuel 17

The Bible has more than 400 references to war, and another 176 to battles. Many of these refer to spiritual conflicts and our personal battles with sin. But the Old Testament especially is filled with nearly 100 instances to military conflict— everything to minor skirmishes to civil war, to massive, multinational battles. Entire books have been written about the military history and strategy found in the Bible. But of all the battles recorded in the Bible, the most famous was not fought between two armies, but between two people.

In 1 Samuel 17, Israel's longtime enemy, the Philistines, have invaded. Battle lines have been drawn, and to make matters worse- the Philistines have a secret weapon.

*(1 Sa 17:1-4) Now the Philistines gathered their forces for war and assembled at Sokoh in Judah. They pitched camp at Ephes Dammim, between Sokoh and Azekah. 2 Saul and the Israelites assembled and camped in the Valley of Elah and drew up their battle line to meet the Philistines. 3 The Philistines occupied one hill and the Israelites another, with the valley between them.*

*4 A champion named Goliath, who was from Gath, came out of the Philistine camp. His height was six cubits and a span.*

The Philistines have encamped on one side of the valley, and the Israelites have set up their camp on the other. **This is a picture of the Valley of Elah as it appears today.** This would be the view from the Israelite camp, and they could look across the way and see all the Philistines encamped over there.

Instead of these two armies coming into the valley and fighting each other, the Philistines were sending out a special champion to challenge the Israelites to choose someone to take him on in individual combat. This seems kind of weird to us, and is unheard of in modern warfare.

Can you imagine Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the president of Ukraine calling Russian president Vladimir Putin, and saying, "Hey look, we've been fighting for a year. You have not done so well. Your troop morale is low, and you are losing face in your own country. Meanwhile my county's infrastructure is in shambles. Instead of having this thing drag on and on, how about I pick out my best guy, and you pick out your best guy, and they take each other on in a 12 round, pay-per-view grudge match to the death, winner takes all. If my guy wins, you get all your people out of Ukraine, and you give back Crimea which you took several years ago, and you promise to leave us alone, but if your guy wins, we surrender, and you keep all the territory you gained. We will know whose side God is really on.

This was a common practice in ancient cultures. Each side picks out their best guy, their champion, they would fight to the death, and in that way the gods could declare who the winner was. This also helps explain why David saw Goliath's challenge and Israel's refusal to respond as an insult to God. Goliath wasn't just defying King Saul or Israel. He was defying

Yahweh. 1 Sam. 17:8-11 says,

<sup>8</sup> *Goliath stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, "Why do you come out and line up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not the servants of Saul? Choose a man and have him come down to me. <sup>9</sup> 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."*  
<sup>10</sup> *Then the Philistine said, "This day I defy the armies of Israel! Give me a man and let us fight each other."* <sup>11</sup> *On hearing the Philistine's words, Saul and all the Israelites were dismayed and terrified.*

Now this goes on for forty days. Every day, Goliath comes out, and defiantly shouts his challenge to the Israelites, and they can do nothing but shake in their sandals, "I can't take him, can you? Ain't no way I'm going out there. I'm not stupid. I've got a wife and kids at home. Surely someone will answer him. You'd have to be an idiot to go out there, I mean look at the guy. He'd squash you like a mosquito. Excuse me, I've gotta go change my shorts."

On day number forty, though, something was different. Something changed. There was someone new in the camp. David, still a young shepherd boy tending his father's sheep, had been sent on a supply run to bring some grain, bread and cheese to the front lines.

So for the first time David hears Goliath's challenge. Verse 24 says that all the Israelites ran from him in great fear, but what about David? What was his response? In verse 26 David says, "*Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?*" David's thinking is you'd have to be an idiot to defy the armies of the true, living God in such a way.

David begins to ask some questions and checking around. Soon word reaches king Saul, and so Saul sends for David, in verse 32 David tells Saul with great assurance and confidence, "*Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him.*"

Now we all know how the story ends. Even people who've never been to church or ever cracked a Bible know something of the story of David and Goliath. It's become the symbol of the underdog facing down the ultimate foe. This is one of the first stories you ever learn in Sunday School. It's an all-time favorite. But this story is just as important for adults as it ever was for children.

Why is this story so valuable for us grown-ups? Because when you're a kid, giants are the stuff of stories and imagination, but when you're an adult, your giants are real. They're not literal giants, but they are very real. We all face giants in life, seemingly impossible obstacles, overwhelming odds, and defeat that is all but assured.

Are you facing a giant in your life? Perhaps it's a financial giant. A debt you fear you will never be able to repay. You dread another phone call, because it might be another collector. You hate getting the mail and seeing another collection notice.

Maybe it's a relationship giant. A years' long bond that has been torn apart, and you wonder if

it can ever be restored. A marriage that has grown cold and distant. A child that refuses to listen no matter what you say or do. A dear friend that has stabbed you in the back.

Maybe your giant is silent and unseen. A habit that you can't stop. A sin that has you in its grip. You can't control it. It controls you. You've said no a hundred times and have sworn, "never again." But again and again you stumble in defeat in the face of temptation. There are all kinds of giants—giants of fear, of regret, chronic illness. Anything that Satan can use to tear you down or tear you apart can become a giant in your life.

Your giant is whatever it is that makes you want to run in the other direction. It transforms your hopes into fears, your dreams into nightmares. Your giant taunts you in the battlefield of your mind, in that valley between faith and doubt. You feel powerless. What's your giant?

Once we know who our giant is, that's when we need to listen to the story of David and Goliath. This story helps us adjust our focus so we can face our giants. This story gives us a new vision a new focus and when we look with our mind's eye through the lens of this story, our giants no longer seem so big.

Many have called this the story of David and the Giant, but really it's the story of David and the Dwarf. You see, the thing with giants is- it's all in what you look at. Saul and all of the other Israelite soldiers focused on things that made Goliath seem like an insurmountable foe, but David focused on something else. David focused on the size of his God. And that is exactly what we should do when we face our own giants.

### **I. Focus on the Size of Your God and Not the Size of Your Giant.**

We should focus on the size of our God and not the size of our giant. Make no mistake, Goliath was an imposing presence. This is how he is described in verses 5-7.

*He had a bronze helmet on his head and wore a coat of scale armor of bronze weighing five thousand shekels; on his legs he wore bronze greaves, and a bronze javelin was slung on his back. His spear shaft was like a weaver's rod, and its iron point weighed six hundred shekels. His shield bearer went ahead of him.*

Eugene Peterson describes the scene vividly:

The air is heavy with hostility. There isn't a man on either side of the valley who isn't hefting a spear, sharpening a sword, or readying for battle. The valley of Elah is a cauldron in which fear and hate and arrogance have been stirred and cooked for weeks into what's now a volatile and lethal brew.

At the center of this storm is a man whose presence overpowers the spiked forest of spears and glint of swords. He stands over nine feet tall. His armspan would have been nearly 10 feet. That would have given him a reach of almost five feet. If you add the length of the sword to that reach, no wonder no one thought they could get near him. Goliath's coat of armor in our terms weighed between 125 and 200 pounds. That was just the armor. He was also wearing a helmet,

and greaves. The head of his spear alone weighed in the neighborhood of 15 to 20 pounds. Now imagine this behemoth of a man being able to twirl this spear around like a baton. In addition to all of this, Goliath had an armor bearer running in front of him carrying a large man-sized shield to protect him from enemy arrows.

To say that Goliath's presence was imposing is a giant understatement. He could make a coward of the bravest of man. But David never once refers to Goliath as a giant. He doesn't refer to his size or appearance at all. What David does do was focus on the size of God. David's confidence was all about what he believed God could do. 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. 46 This day the Lord will deliver you into my hands, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head. This very day I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds and the wild animals, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. 47 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."*

You see, David didn't see the prospect of fighting Goliath as a battle of Goliath versus David, but as Goliath versus God. David knew who the real giant was, and that was God. Compared to God, Goliath was nothing but a pipsqueak little dwarf.

When you only look at the size of the giant in your life, you will feel overwhelmed. You won't see any way to overcome it. But when you focus on God and his greatness, his power, his glory, then your giants begin to shrink in size until they become quite manageable.

Too often we only consider the size of the giant. Our weights and measures are all about how big the giant is, and we forget about how big God is. This is the same God that Paul describes as immeasurable, unsearchable, and beyond tracing out. Compared to God, any giant, any challenge, any failure, any sin, any temptation, any habit is only a dwarf. That's why we have to focus on the size of our God, not the size of our giant.

## **II. Focus on the Size of Your God, Not the Size of Your Inadequacy.**

Secondly, you have to focus on the Size of Your God, Not the Size of Your Inadequacy. Imagine David, he's nothing but a shepherd boy. His build is slight, not yet fully developed. He has no military experience. He doesn't have any training. Well, except for one thing- countless hours using his sling out in the fields watching the sheep. How many broom trees had David used for target practice? How many predators had David driven off with a well-slung stone?

But no one would have counted that as military training, any more than a farm kid plinking with a 22 would be considered an expert sniper. You could list a hundred reasons why he couldn't face Goliath, and not one reason why he could, well, except for one. He had God on his side.

No one would have questioned David had he just dropped off the supplies and then went back home. No one would have thought less of David had he said, "That's not a job for me. I'll leave it to one of the professionals." By any measure David was inadequate to the task.

But here's the thing. God has always used inadequate people. And through these inadequate people God is able to do more than we could ever ask or imagine. Throughout the Bible is story after story of God using inadequate people. People who didn't have enough ability, enough knowledge, enough experience, enough strength to do the job. They didn't have the right background, the right resume, or the right heritage, but God used them anyway.

We always have all sorts of reasons and excuses for why we can't face our giants. We say if only I was better able to do this. If only I had more that. If only I had that talent or that ability or that spiritual gift, then I could really do something. We let our own inadequacy keep us from facing the giants in our lives and we sit on the sideline, filled with fear, letting that giant come back day after day.

We will always be able to think of more reasons why we can't face our giant than why we can. There may be a hundred reasons why you can't pay that debt and get back on your feet. There may be a hundred reasons why you can't save your marriage or rebuild that relationship. There may be a hundred reasons why you can't stop that habit and have victory over that sin. And there may only be one reason why you can, and that is God is on your side. That one reason trumps all of the others. If it's the right thing to do, if it's what God calls you to do, He can enable you to bring down any giant in your life.

It's not about what you can accomplish on your own. It's about what you're willing to let God do through you. It's about how much you're willing to trust Him. We must focus on the size of our God, and not the size of our inadequacy.

### **III. Focus on the Size of Your God, Not the Size of Other's Expectations**

The third focal adjustment we must make is to focus on the size of our God, not the size of other's expectations. If we always let the thoughts and opinions of others be the deciding factor, we will never be able to stand up to the giants in our lives. There will always be too many voices telling you that you can't do it and why you can't do it. There are precious few voices telling you that you can. You cannot let the expectations of the many be the measure of your faith in what God can do.

David had plenty of voices telling him that he couldn't do it. His oldest brother questioned his real motives for being there. In verse 28 he accuses David, *"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."* King Saul was quite blunt in his assessment of David's chances in verse 33, *"You are not able to go out against the Philistine and fight him; you are only a boy, and he has been a fighting man from his youth."*

But David didn't allow their expectations to define his possibilities. Now it's always a good idea to seek wise counsel, but you better be able to tell the difference between good counsel from bad advice. There will always be plenty of naysayers who will give you faithless counsel. They will give you opinions that give no account to what God can do. Who do you go to for advice? One of the most important decisions you make is whose counsel you seek.

In this story, it's interesting that Saul, who wasn't willing to fight himself, who said there was no way David could face Goliath, and yet he was willing to tell David how to do it. Look at verses 38-39, *"Then Saul dressed David in his own tunic. He put a coat of armor on him and a bronze helmet on his head. David fastened on his sword over the tunic and tried walking around, because he was not used to them."* I won't do it David, and I don't think you can either, but here's how you should.

Isn't that how it goes. There always people who aren't willing to do it. They aren't willing to help. They tell you it can't be done, but they're always willing to tell you how you should do it. Don't listen to them. They will only keep you from realizing God's purpose for your life. Ignore those voices. Don't focus on the size of other's thoughts. Focus on the size of God.

### **Conclusion:**

We will finish the story of David and Goliath next week. But I want to close this morning with some quick observations as to why David was able to have such a giant view of God. When we look at Psalms David wrote, we can see David's view of God.

First, David viewed God as the omnipotent creator. He's the all-powerful maker of everything. When David considered the grandeur of the mountains, the majesty of the oceans, the vastness of space and stars overhead, the power of a storm, he remembered that God made them all. That's when David understood that everything else was small by comparison.

(Psalm 19:1)

The heavens declare the glory of God;  
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

(Psalm 65:5-8)

<sup>5</sup> You answer us with awesome deeds of righteousness,  
O God our Savior,  
the hope of all the ends of the earth  
and of the farthest seas,  
<sup>6</sup> who formed the mountains by your power,  
having armed yourself with strength,  
<sup>7</sup> who stilled the roaring of the seas,  
the roaring of their waves,  
and the turmoil of the nations.

<sup>8</sup> Those living far away fear your wonders;

where morning dawns and evening fades  
you call forth songs of joy.

David also saw God's omniscient knowledge. God is all-knowing. David understood that not only did God know everything about him, He knew everything – period. There was nothing that could be known that God did not know. He was God of the past, present and future.

(Ps 147:4-5)

<sup>4</sup> He determines the number of the stars  
and calls them each by name.

<sup>5</sup> Great is our Lord and mighty in power;  
his understanding has no limit.

(Ps 33:13-14)

<sup>13</sup> From heaven the LORD looks down  
and sees all mankind;

<sup>14</sup> from his dwelling place he watches  
all who live on earth—

Thirdly, David not only knew that God was omnipotent (all-powerful) and omniscient (all-knowing), but he also understood that God was an omnipresent Spirit. He's the everywhere God. There was nowhere where God was not. God was everywhere David went- to guide him, protect him, and comfort him.

(Ps 139:7-10)

<sup>7</sup> Where can I go from your Spirit?

Where can I flee from your presence?

<sup>8</sup> If I go up to the heavens, you are there;  
if I make my bed in the depths, you are  
there.

<sup>9</sup> If I rise on the wings of the dawn,  
if I settle on the far side of the sea,

<sup>10</sup> even there your hand will guide me,  
your right hand will hold me fast.

When you are facing your giant, where is your focus? What is your view of God? How do you see Him? When you learn to see God as He is, all your giants become dwarfs in comparison.