

STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF DAVID

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by

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Today we will look at the duel between David and Goliath. Since the Philistines had a monopoly on iron smelting, one of the weapons the Israelites depended upon was the sling shot. They became very proficient with it. The stones they used were 2" to 3" in diameter and were placed in a leather cup on the end of two long leather cords. They would whirl this cup over their heads until momentum built up, then they would let go of one of the strings. The rock, traveling at about 200 hundred feet per second, would hit its object with a force of about 5,000 foot pounds of energy. It was designed to crush bone. They could use it against men in armor because it was designed to penetrate.

Leading up to this confrontation between David and Goliath, we have seen some principles. Number one: the Philistines are intruders in the land. The land was given to the Israelites in a covenant God made with Abraham, reaffirmed with Isaac and Jacob, and then reaffirmed again through the people he had Moses and Joshua lead to the promised land. But, even though the land was promised to them by God, they were forced to fight for it.

Canaan is not a picture of heaven. There will be no fights in heaven. It is a picture of resting in God in the middle of the battles down here. The battles we are fighting are already won. We are to fight from a position of rest, depending on God's resources and God's schedule. Our enemies have been defeated in Christ and our job is to possess the land by faith. The Philistines are invaders in the land.

Number two: the Philistines are to be exterminated. As long as they are around, they will be a warlike, hostile, uncircumcised people. They had been a thorn in the side of Israel for years because they had never been totally exterminated. The Israelites, on the other hand, owned the land because God graciously gave it to them not because they earned it. He marked this covenant with them by the sign of circumcision. Circumcision was not only God's sign of the seed promise [in Genesis to Abraham] but also the sign of the land promise. So, every Israelite male in that army standing on the cliff across the valley from the Philistines had a mark on his body that said, "This land is mine. God gave it to me, and I have the right to it forever." Yet there they stood, marked by God, letting an enemy, who had no right to be there, immobilize them.

Scripture tells us that, through Christ, born again believers also have been "circumcised." We are marked men and women. So, even though by God's deliberate will these Goliaths are allowed in our lives, no enemy has the right there. Resting in Jesus Christ, we are to reign as kings. We are to exterminate and conquer right down here in the land God has given us.

Number three: as long as Goliath held the Israelites at bay, he was a reproach and a disgrace to them. They were the "armies of the living God," yet they were terrorized by one uncircumcised Philistine.

If we allow the Goliaths in our lives to possess us, we are disgraced in the same way. We need to realize that and to never make peace with them. Look at Joshua. He rid Canaan of all the Goliaths, all the giants, except for those in the little Southwest corner of the land. They came back to haunt him.

Number four: not only are Goliaths a reproach to us, but they also make a mockery of the living God. If we believe our God is God of the universe, that Jesus Christ maintains the universe by the word of his power, that he is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent and we do not act like he is, we make a mockery of our God.

At this juncture, the Philistines were ahead. They held much of the western seacoast and the western slope of the mountains. They controlled iron smelting, which reduced the Israelites to wooden weapons. There was no inducement for them to even consider Israel's God, "Yahweh," as a viable option.

The Goliaths in our lives are like this. If we let them win, we are saying to ourselves, and to the world, "My God is too small. He is not adequate. He can handle cigarettes, but he can not handle jealousy, or pride or ego or lust, or whatever." Yes, it is hard. No one wants to give up the rights to himself, but that is what God wants. Number one on his priority list is me.

So, now let us look at a man of faith. The Israelites are on one side of a canyon. The Philistines are on the other. Goliath is down in between defying the armies of Israel, the armies of the living God, and they are cowering in fear. David comes and asks them a question, trying to get them to focus on their God. His question in I Samuel 17, verse 26:

What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine, and takes away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should taunt the armies of the living God?

"The armies of the living God," he says. He is trying to focus them on their God, the same God that supplied his needs when the lion and the bear attacked his sheep.

1 Samuel 17, beginning with verse 31,

"When the words which David spoke were heard, they told them to Saul, and he sent for him. And David said to Saul, "Let no man's heart fail on account of him [Goliath]; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine." Then Saul said to David, "You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for you are but a youth while he has been a warrior from his youth."

David and Saul were both Israelites but they were focused on different things. David looked at God. Saul looked at David. God had anointed David to reign as king over Israel. He had not said, "I have anointed you king, now go get killed by Goliath." So, David, looking at his God and the covenant his God had made with him, expected to kill this giant. It was not because he believed he was bigger or better or smarter than the giant, but it was because his God had made a commitment to him. David would reign. Now, it would be on God's timetable, but David would reign. God was committed to that.

Saul, on the other hand, took a look at the present resources, a youth with lovely red hair, beautiful eyes, small of stature, and it did not add up to destruction of giants. So, Saul looks at David and says, "No way!" But, David looks at God and says, "No problem!"

To continue, verse 34:

But David said to Saul, "Your servant was tending his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and took a lamb from the flock, I went out after him and attacked him, and rescued it from his mouth; and when he rose up against me, I seized him by his beard and struck him and killed him. Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, since he has taunted the armies of the living God."

David's victory over a bear or a lion was not due to David's ability, his strength or his size. But with Yahweh on his side, he could walk up to a bear, snatch back his lamb, grab the bear by its beard and plunge a knife into him. He was used to infighting bears, whose claws rip and tear, or lions whose jaw could crush a human skull. An African lion (I don't know how they were in Palestine) can jump over a 6 or 7 foot thorn hedge, take a bullock in its mouth and, still holding the bullock, leap back over the hedge. Of course, they first crush its

skull so it doesn't fight, but they are extremely strong. I don't know if the lions in David's time were that big or not. It is possible they were more like the pumas of today, which would still be pretty mean to wrestle. David looked at God's faithfulness in the past [There was no way a small shepherd boy with only a stick and a sling could take on a lion or a bear by himself] and based upon that, realized God would be faithful in the present.

He goes on in verse 37:

And David said, "The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine."

That is a very poor translation. The Hebrew is a beautiful play on words. You can see the contempt. The more proper translation is, "The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the paw of this Philistine." "He is just another animal like the bear and the lion, and the Lord will deliver me as he has in the past."

And Saul said to David, "Go, and may the Lord be with you."

Saul, being a man of the flesh, does not surprise us by his actions. Following is sincere flesh in action, verse 38:

Then Saul clothed David with his garments and put a bronze helmet on his head, and he clothed him with armor. And David girded his sword over his armor and tried to walk, for he had not tested them.

Saul was sincere about wanting David to win. He gave David the best he had; his own armor, his own helmet, his own sword. But Saul was head and shoulders over all of Israel, you will remember, and David was a rather small young man. Saul's armor probably came down to his feet. Not only could he not run, he probably could not even walk in it. Also, there was a difference between the battle Saul was trying to fight and the battle David knew was the real issue. There was a difference also in the weaponry of Saul and the weaponry of David. Saul saw only a physical enemy. David saw that God was the issue. He wanted to put on the whole armor of God, which, in this battle, turned out to be only a sling shot & 5 smooth stones. When we fight a battle, our weaponry is not the whole armor of Saul. It is the whole armor of God.

So David said to Saul, "I cannot go with these, for I have not tested them." And David took them off. And he took his stick in his hand [note the armor of God was not a sword. There were not many swords around] and chose for himself five smooth stones from the brook, and put them in the shepherd's bag which he had, even in his pouch, and his sling was in his hand; and he approached the Philistine.

In this case, the armor of God was a shepherd's staff and a shepherd's sling, the very things that David had used in fighting the battles of God before. God does not strike with lightning. He does not provide supercharged weapons to wage warfare. Neither does he ask you to put your mind in neutral when you walk by faith. He wants you to take whatever he has given you, whatever you are used to using, and step out in faith expecting him to use those same things again and again. He is a faithful, systematic God, and what has worked in the past will work in the future. If you have walked in quiet obedience to your Lord in the past, and have overcome cigarettes by that quiet obedience, when lust is staring you in the face, walk in that same quiet step-by-step obedience and you will overcome the Goliath of lust.

What you and I do not have the right to do is to box God in. We do not know how long we must walk in faith before we defeat our Philistine Goliaths. Nevertheless, we should take the normal thinking man's precautions, use the weapons God has given us and step out. David went to the brook and picked up five stones. He did not say, "Listen, God, I am going to pick up one stone, and you had better make that hit the target." What if he had stumbled? Instead he took five smooth stones, just as he had many, many times before, and stepped out. Although in the Book of Judges the Benjaminites had 700 slingers that could split a hair, David did not know how many stones it would take to slay a 10 foot man. He knew God was going to defeat this man, but whether it would be number 1 or number 5 stone, he did not know. So, he took the normal, everyday number of stones

and gave God the option to do what he chose.

Do not test the living God. Do not put out fleeces. It is childish. Do say, "Thank you, Lord, I have the victory. I know it is mine. How or when you will give it to me, I do not know, but I know it is mine. So I am going to do whatever is normal and natural and obvious and prepare myself for whatever you call me to do. I will use this mind you have given me, put it in low gear and head out." That is exactly what David did.

Verse 41:

Then the Philistine came on and approached David, with the shield-bearer in front of him. When the Philistine looked and saw David, he disdained him; for he was but a youth, and ruddy, with a handsome appearance. And the Philistine said to David, "Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks? [Not even a sword] And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. The Philistine also said to David, "Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the sky and the beasts of the field."

Note also "The Philistine cursed David by his gods." I believe that translation misses the point. "Gods" is the same Hebrew word as in Genesis 1:1 which speaks of the true God as creator. I feel it should read, "cursed David by his (David's) God" because in verse 45, David says Goliath has taunted the God of the armies of Israel. I think Goliath blasphemed Yahweh when he screamed at David, and then and there he became a dead man. David said to himself, "I have him now. He just took on Yahweh, and he is a dead man."

Goliath was about 10 feet tall, clothed in armor of bronze, with a javelin at his back, a spear in his hand, a sword at his side and a shield-bearer in front of him. On the other hand David had a stick, five stones in a pouch and a sling-shot over his shoulder. So you might say Goliath's attitude was confidently arrogant.

Now look at the actions of David in verses 45 through 47. Verse 45:

Then David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword, a spear, and a javelin, but I come to you in the name [In Hebrew the phrase, "the name," indicates all the power, authority, rank, all that the person is] of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have taunted.

And, after properly focusing on who is fighting whom, see the security and assurance that David has, verse 46:

This day the Lord ["Yahweh," in Hebrew the covenant God of Israel. David is claiming that covenant. By circumcision, he has the mark of that covenant, on himself. This land is his by the gift of Yahweh, and he is putting God to the test in that sense. He is saying, "You have given us the land. I am taking you up on your promise.] will deliver you up into my hands, and I will strike you down and remove your head from you.[That is quite a phrase considering David has no sword. But Goliath has, and he has been a dead man ever since he blasphemed Yahweh.] And I will give the dead bodies of the army of the Philistines this day to the birds of the sky and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the Lord [Yahweh] does not deliver by sword or by spear; for the battle is the Lord's [Yahweh's] and He will give you into our hands [not my hand].

David sees an issue here between the glory of God and the glory of man. He says, "God is going to deliver you into my hands, not for my sake or my glory, but for his."

Notice, David declares God has two redemptive reasons for defeating the Philistine. One: "...that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel," David is saying, "Israel is where God lives. The Israelites are God's people. If you want to know about the true God, He is in Israel." Remember Christ's answer to the Samaritan woman when she said, "Our fathers worshiped in this mountain [Gerizim] and you say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship" His response to her flippancy was, "We worship that which we know, for salvation is from the Jews." A very loose translation might be, "Even though unbelieving Sadducees are bungling it, the basic concept of sacrifice and the Old Testament law, prophets and psalms is the way of

salvation, and it is from the Jewish nation. It is not found in Samaria where you will not accept any of the Bible but the Pentateuch. Your sacrifices on Mount Gerizim are a stench in the nostrils of God."

Two: "...and that all this assembly may know that the Lord [Yahweh] does not deliver by sword or by spear; for the battle is the Lord's [Yahweh's] and He will give you into our hands." Probably here he looks back at the Jews. He wants them to know that their covenant God [and that would get their attention] does not deliver by sword or by spear, [the way they tried to arm David]. He wants them to know the battle is Yahweh's, and Yahweh will give the Philistine into Israel's hands. He will not be giving him into David's hands.

In Deuteronomy 17, God indicated one of his rules for the kings of Israel was not to multiply horses unto themselves. Every other nation used horses and camels and chariots of iron, but God told the Jewish people that it was a key issue that their king not go back to Egypt to multiply horses. David noted why when he indicated "the battle is the Lord's."

A good example is King Jehoshaphat. He was a good king, but he had some problems with the flesh. During his reign "the sons of Moab and the sons of Ammon, together with some of the Meunites came to make war against him" [2 Chronicles 20]. The Lord told him, "Go to battle with the priests in front singing hymns and the people dancing," This they did. As they approached the battlefield they saw that these enemy armies, who were a variety of nations thrown together to take on the Jews, had gotten into a brawl among themselves and had completely destroyed each other. Jehoshaphat's army went forth to battle and all the enemy lay dead. His enormous standing army, supported for years by the taxes of his people, did not shoot one arrow. They just collected the spoils. The battle was the Lord's

God's idea was to have the Jewish nation always at a disadvantage so they would put no trust in human resources. God does not want our will, our integrity of character or our most valiant efforts to deal with the Goliaths, or even the little Philistines behind them, in our lives. The battle is the Lord's. He may deal with us until we bottom out, until we lie hopeless before him, before he brings us back. He wants to teach us that out of death comes resurrection power. Until we have been crucified and have put to death everything we count on outside of Jesus Christ and his indwelling life, we cannot experience the fullness of the resurrection power of Christ. Our God is determined to put us through afflictions, persecutions, and perplexities, so the life of Jesus Christ may be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

Verse 48:

Then it happened when the Philistine rose and came and drew near to meet David, that David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine.

Note that David "ran quickly" to approach Goliath. He was taking on a 10 foot giant along with a javelin, a spear, a sword and a shield-bearer, yet he eagerly approached Goliath because the battle was already won, and he knew it. Goliath had challenged Yahweh, and David was just a vehicle in God's battle.

Verse 49:

And David put his hand into his bag and took from it a stone and slung it and struck the Philistine on his forehead [Goliath was so certain of victory he did not even cover his forehead]. And the stone sank into his forehead, so that he fell on his face to the ground.

You would think with all his paraphernalia that Goliath would be invincible, but I have never seen any Philistine helmets that had a visor covering the forehead. They did wear a kind of band, but it would not have stopped a rock the size David used. According to drawings of the time, even with their helmets, their foreheads looked to be quite exposed. That is why they used a shield.

Verse 50:

Thus David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, and he struck the Philistine and killed him; but there was no sword in David's hand. 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.

We need to remember that as Christians we are fighting battles already won. Colossians 2 tells us that at the cross Jesus Christ triumphed over Satan much as Roman conquerors in the days of Rome. A Roman field general who had taken vast new territory and killed great numbers of new enemies [old revolts did not count], had the right of a triumphal entry. He would chain his enemies to his chariot hubcaps and march them through town; those chained to the front hubcaps would be trained by the Romans and go back to serve Rome as local officers; those chained to the rear could not be trusted, and went to the coliseum to be slain. As the conqueror paraded through town in an open chariot, flowers were scattered before him, incense was wafted about. The incense to those in front was the sweet incense of life unto life. The incense to those behind was the incense of death unto death. The conquering general marched up to the Emperor, who crowned him with the stephanos, the crown of victory. [It was made of laurel leaves, woven together like the one given victors in the Olympic games.] It was the highest honor a conquering general could receive.

This is the exact idiom used in Colossians 2. At the cross, Christ chained Satan and all his demonic hosts to his rear hubcaps and marched them through the streets of heaven. He made "a public display of them." They are all going to hell. So, in Christ, you are seated in the chariot with the Lord, and Satan and all his hosts are chained to the rear hubcaps being dragged through town. As a child of God, you are fighting a battle already won.

Now look at what happens to all the men around when David exhibits that strong act of faith, verse 52:

And the men of Israel and Judah arose and shouted and pursued the Philistines as far as the valley [probably entrance to the valley, probably Gath], and to the gates of Ekron [those were the two major fortified cities of the Philistines] And the slain Philistines lay along the way to Shaaraim, even to Gath and Ekron. And the sons of Israel returned from chasing the Philistines and plundered their camps. Then David took the Philistine's head and brought it to Jerusalem [this is sometime later], but he put his weapons in his tent.

With renewed faith in their Lord, the Israelites took on the Philistines and their iron weapons. Still using mainly wooden weapons, slings and very few swords or spears, they chased them down the wadi to their fortified cities, pummeling them all the way. The Philistines, laden with armor, could not run very fast, so the slingers picked them off one by one. Then on the way back, the Israelites picked up all that great iron weaponry they had not been allowed to have. God armed the Israelites with the weapons of the Philistines.

David took the head of Goliath and hung it in Jerusalem. At that time, Jerusalem was a stronghold of the Jebusites, Canaanites whom the Jews were supposed to have exterminated but never could. David eventually made Jerusalem his city, his capital, the center of the worship system. He united the tribes of Israel there, and it became known as "the city of David." I believe he nailed that head right outside the gate of the stronghold of Jerusalem as a way of saying, "Jebusites, I am going to get you. Look at Goliath and remember I will be back." And he was. He took the city. He took the stronghold. He conquered the Jebusites. Nobody beats the army of the living God.

We are the temple of the living God. Nobody mocks us or taunts us without taunting Yahweh. Any battle we fight we are fighting with Yahweh as our champion. He wants us to win because he does not like his temple [whose temple we are] to be dirtied by Philistines. David believed that and so should we.

Prayer:

Father, we thank you so much for this illustration of how you operate, for that fact that we are victors even now in Jesus Christ, that we are fighting battles that are already won, and how dumb it is to be tied by some Philistine or Goliath who is really fighting you, when all we have to do is step out in a normal, natural, obvious way and by faith believe that you have already won. Then we can cut off the Goliath with his own sword. Thank you, Father, so much in Jesus' name. Amen.

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