

Overcoming Giants

I Samuel 17:4-10,40-45; Psalm 59:1-8, 16-17; Philippians 4:4-7

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Israel had a problem. His name was Goliath. He stood 10 feet tall and morning and evening, day by day, he came out to meet the army of Israel.

This giant of a man carried on his body

- a coat of armor that weighed 200 pounds;
- he wore bronze leggings;
- He carried a javelin that had an iron spearhead on it that weighed 25 pounds.

He was a one-man war machine.

Israel was not unaccustomed to great trials. They had escaped from Egypt.

They had survived as a nation in the face of hunger and thirst and serpents and death in the desert. But despite all of their trials, they had entered the Land of Promise.

Now the army of Israel stood immobilized. How had Israel come to this point in her history? The army of Israel had been seized by some giants other than Goliath. Now they found themselves in fear that led to discouragement, and finally to hopelessness. Fear had distorted their perception of the real problem. It was as though they were looking into one of those funny-shaped carnival mirrors, and what they saw and what they feared was distorted and all out of proportion to reality.

During Saul's reign as King of Israel there had been many battles and many victories. But this time was different. This time the Philistines had invaded Judah and made camp on one of the mountainsides. Saul had moved the army of Israel to an opposing mountainside and made camp. Every morning Saul and his army suited up for battle. Every morning they marched out and looked at the Philistines with Goliath standing out in front. Every evening the army of Israel marched back to their camp without an arrow having been shot.

But the giants didn't leave when the day was over. The giants didn't disappear when the army returned to camp.

As those Israeli soldiers returned to their camp at the end of the day, they carried with them the feelings of despair and defeat. They had lost hope and had quit trying for a victory. Life became a routine of marking time. They were afraid to risk doing what they were meant to do,

So victory was no longer possible until young David arrives on the scene.

He's come to bring food supplies for his two brothers who are serving in the army. David is coming to the scene of the battle, fresh from an encounter with God's prophet, Samuel.

David has just learned that he will be the next king over Israel. He has the anointing of the Lord upon him. He is filled with daring and courage and optimism. He sees not a problem, but a marvelous opportunity. He knows that he can overcome the situation.

Notice that his offer to help was not so well received. They taunted him. They laughed at him. After all, they were soldiers! Who was he! And then, when it became apparent that he was determined to fight for them, they wanted him to do it as they had always done it. (After all, they have been so successful so far.) Here David, wear this armor! Here David, this is the way we do things out here! David, if you want to be in our army, do things the way we do them!

David

- makes his way down the mountainside to the little brook that flows into the Elah River,
- picks up some smooth stones,
- puts them in his pouch, and
- makes his way up the mountain on the other side, armed only with his shepherd's staff, his sling and the stones.

The Israeli army watches from a safe distance, certain of defeat. I think they probably watched like we used to watch scary movies when we were kids. Probably with their hands over their eyes but kind of peeking out so they could see this upstart David get his "come-up-ns." But suddenly there is a great release of jubilation which pours out of their souls as the giant is overcome and the victory is won.

What made the difference between the army of Israel and David?
They both faced the giant, Goliath.

We often face giant situations in our lives as well.

What makes the difference for us when the giants enter our lives?

- Giants that are larger than life,
- Giants that consume our thoughts and our energies,
- Giants that play "old tapes" in our mind and cause us to rehearse over and over those traumas in our lives,
- Giants that do not go away when the day is over,
- Giants that disturb our nights as well as our days.

What do we do? What can we do?

Let me suggest several things that may have made the difference for David and probably would make a difference for us.

Let me suggest that we look at the giants in our lives with new eyes.

David saw the giant as one big bully who could be overcome. He saw that giant as a God-given possibility to demonstrate that God is always in control when one allows God to be in control. Of course the giant was big, but David saw one giant as no match for one young boy plus God. David had recently been in conversation with God and he knew that God was there with him in the battle against the giant.

Let me suggest that we must see ourselves with new eyes.

Throughout the ages folks have told others that "you can't do that" or "it can't be done" or "we don't do that." Maybe someone has even said that to you.

John Cary grew up in the Particular Baptist group in England in the 1700s.

This was a group of Baptist who believed that God was a God who had already predestined everyone who was going to be saved and that there was no need for missions. They were Calvinists. Cary somehow felt the overwhelming power of the Holy Spirit in his life telling him otherwise.

And so in 1793 he left England and traveled to Kolkata (now known to us as Calcutta) India to share the Good News that Christ died for you too.

During his first years in India he managed an indigo factory to support his family and translated the New Testament into the Bengali language. He would later translate the Bible into Sanskrit and other major dialects.

Carey then moved to Serampore, where he bought a house big enough for his extended family. He bought a school which would become his principle means of support and a printing press to print copies of the New Testament.

Under Carey's ministry a college would be established that included a seminary to prepare Indian citizens for the ministry. That college, now a university, and that seminary continue to this day. That home became the home for the President of both. On the entrance wall of the seminary is written the words that became Carey's life phrase:

"Expect great things from God;
Attempt great things for God."

Some years ago I was blessed to visit those hallowed places and sit in that house with the family of the person who is now the President of those schools.

Some facts that you might like to know:

- Carey's work contributed much to the American Baptist Mission Society, a precursor to American Baptist Churches USA.
- An American Baptist Missionary, Dan Chetti, grew up in that house. His father, Dr. Chetti was one of the Presidents of that University and Seminary.

Dan and his wife Sarah, also from India, have served for many years as missionaries to Lebanon. Dan's brother, Sam, served many years as the Executive Minister of the American Baptist Churches of Los Angeles. Their sister is married to a Pastor in Oregon. Cary did touch the world for Christ.

That young shepherd boy, David, also knew that his life had been touched and blessed by God and that he had been set apart for something special.

Just as David realized that he was unique in God's eyes, we are all unique and different. We have different appearances, different personalities. But we have one characteristic in common. We are all made in the image of God and we are all blessed by God. We are hard pressed to know the depth and the extent of meaning that being made in the "image of God" holds.

Some things can be said about it. Because we are made in the image of God, God desires that we are becoming more and more the persons we were created to be. God had seen something in the integrity and the courage and the possibility of David that caused God to choose him to be anointed by Samuel as the next King of Israel. God's hand had touched David's life and David had the courage to attempt great things for God.

Because we are made in God's image, God has also given us freedom to make choices. We were not created to be victims of our circumstances. We may not be able to keep all of the giants out of our lives, but God is able to give us the strength to confront them and overcome them. And when we see ourselves with new eyes, we will realize that we are being blessed.

David would have known the implication of the family blessing. It would have meant that one inherited all of the resources, all of the authority, all of the power that had been possessed by the family household.

We need to realize that we are also being blessed by God. God has placed at our disposal all of the resources, all of the possibilities, and all of the power necessary to be who we were created to be and to do all that God would have us do. That applies to us as a church as well.

- **We need to look at the giants in our lives with new eyes.**
- **We need to see ourselves with new eyes**

And then, we need to see God with new eyes.

Christians are not immune to the problems and challenges of this world. But God is with us, offering wisdom and insight and peace that only God can give.

David came to see God in a fresh, new, and powerful way when the prophet Samuel anointed him as the next King of Israel. David, a young shepherd boy, brought in from the field where he was watching over the sheep. God would take that young shepherd boy watching over sheep, and teach him, as a King, how to watch over a nation.

John Carey was led by God through the Holy Spirit to interpret the Holy Scriptures in a way different than his culture taught him, led by the Holy Spirit to a land with people who didn't look like him, didn't speak his language, didn't worship like he did, didn't live as he did in England. And John Carey would become the Father of Modern Day Missions.

At some time in each of our lives we find ourselves standing face to face with our own personal giants. Giants have many names: Loneliness, Fear, Disappointment, Anger, Frustration, Guilt, Hopelessness, Grief, Depression, or name your own giants.

We have a choice about how we will deal with them. We can wake up every day, look at them, worry over them, be angry about them, and despair that life can be any different OR, we can do whatever we know we need to do to bring about their defeat.

We need to know that victory is possible if we desire it. We need to accept the fact that we are persons created in the image of God – people of worth, significance, and value. We need to claim the promise of God, that God is ever present with us, no matter what the circumstances, We need to entrust ourselves and our "giants" to God.

Two people, David and Cary, who first committed themselves to be God's persons and then committed themselves to God's calling upon their lives.

God's invitation to commitment comes to us as well.

- Commitment of our lives, including all of the giants in our lives, to God.
- Commitment to Christ and Christ's Church and its ministry of caring for others, even though the Church will always be imperfect because it is made up of human beings.
- Commitment to live in trust and faithfulness to the God of grace whose love wraps around us no matter how many giants we encounter.

Amen.