

## David & Goliath, Part 1 10-17-21

### Courageous Faith

We look today at one of those Bible stories that even the unchurched know fairly well. *17:1-4 Now the Philistines gathered their armies for battle; and they were gathered at Socoh which belongs to Judah, and they camped between Socoh and Azekah, in Ephes-dammim. <sup>2</sup>Saul and the men of Israel were gathered and camped in the valley of Elah, and drew up in battle array to encounter the Philistines. <sup>3</sup>The Philistines stood on the mountain on one side while Israel stood on the mountain on the other side, with the valley between them. <sup>4</sup>Then a champion came out from the armies of the Philistines named Goliath, from Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span.* This is probably about nine feet tall. Wow! The NBA has never seen anyone this large and some of you may well say, “Come on! Nobody is that big!” And you may be the same person who said, “No fish is big enough to swallow Jonah!” I heard one lady say about that, “Son, you ain’t seen all of God’s fish.” So, I can say, “Son, you ain’t seen all of God’s giants.” For the record, I believe the tallest man whose height was verified was a Pakistani who was 8’7” tall and he was not skinny. If God grows them that tall today I have no problem with him growing a 9 foot Philistine 3000 years ago back when they could put dinosaur milk on their Wheaties and before they invented the ozone.

This is presented to us not as fairy tale, but as history. Verses 4-7 describe his impressive armor and then in *8-11 He stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel and said to them, "Why do you come out to draw up in battle array? Am I not the Philistine and you servants of Saul? Choose a man for yourselves and let him come down to me. <sup>9</sup>If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will become your servants; but if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall become our servants and serve us."* *<sup>10</sup>Again the Philistine said, "I defy the ranks of Israel this day; give me a man that we may fight together."* *<sup>11</sup>When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid.* So, this is not a gentle giant, but a taunting giant, a trash-talking spear-wielding 9-foot monstrosity who dares the people of Israel to send out their best guy for some mano-a-mano. This kind of thing was not uncommon in that day. If you watch movies of old wars you know how messy it gets when 5000 warriors on each side run at each other with spears. The Philistines thought it would be a lot neater to just let some one-on-one action settle their disputes – especially since their one was Goliath. But Israel had a problem. After they saw and heard Goliath, no one felt

very heroic. They had a saying in Israel then. "The bigger they are, the harder they hit." And nobody wanted a piece of the big fella. The whole gang of soldiers was afraid.

And now, back at the ranch, we find David, the youngest son of Jesse. Three of his older brothers were on the front lines with King Saul. *15 But David went back and forth from Saul to tend his father's flock at Bethlehem.* And now, back at the front. *16 The Philistine came forward morning and evening for forty days and took his stand.* And now, back at the ranch *17-25*

*Then Jesse said to David his son, "Take now for your brothers an ephah of this roasted grain and these ten loaves and run to the camp to your brothers. <sup>18</sup>Bring also these ten cuts of cheese to the commander of their thousand, and look into the welfare of your brothers, and bring back news of them. <sup>19</sup>For Saul and they and all the men of Israel are in the valley of Elah, fighting with the Philistines." <sup>20</sup>So David arose early in the morning and left the flock with a keeper and took the supplies and went as Jesse had commanded him. And he came to the circle of the camp while the army was going out in battle array shouting the war cry. <sup>21</sup>Israel and the Philistines drew up in battle array, army against army. <sup>22</sup>Then David left his baggage in the care of the baggage keeper, and ran to the battle line and entered in order to greet his brothers. <sup>23</sup>As he was talking with them, behold, the champion, the Philistine from Gath named Goliath, was coming up from the army of the Philistines, and he spoke these same words; and David heard them. <sup>24</sup>When all the men of Israel saw the man, they fled from him and were greatly afraid. <sup>25</sup>The men of Israel said, "Have you seen this man who is coming up? Surely he is coming up to defy Israel. And it will be that the king will enrich the man who kills him with great riches and will give him his daughter and make his father's house free in Israel."*

Saul had sweetened the pot for the potential hero of Israel. Still the men of Israel reasoned this way, "What doth it profit a man to gain money and a wife and lose his life?"

*Then David spoke to the men who were standing by him, saying, "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? <sup>27</sup>The people answered him in accord with this word, saying, "Thus it will be done for the man who kills him." <sup>28</sup>Now Eliab his oldest brother heard when he spoke to the men; and Eliab's anger burned against David and he said, "Why have you come down? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your insolence and the wickedness of your heart; for you have come down in order to see the battle." <sup>29</sup>But David said, "What have I done now? Was it not just a question?" <sup>30</sup>Then he turned away from him to another and said the same thing; and the people answered the same thing as before. <sup>31</sup>When the words which David spoke were heard, they told them to Saul, and he sent for him. <sup>32</sup>David said to Saul, "Let no man's heart fail on account of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine." <sup>33</sup>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." <sup>34</sup>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, <sup>35</sup>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. <sup>36</sup>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."*<sup>37</sup>*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." And Saul said to David, "Go, and may the Lord be with you."*

Here we have a most familiar story, known to some extent by virtually everyone. You hear athletic events often referred to in David and Goliath terms. Big underdogs are compared to David. Preachers love this story, not only for its drama, but also for the great lessons it teaches on courage and on faith. Courage and faith are closely related and so we'll just join them and look together at the courageous faith of the young man, David. His is a faith that has impressed men and women now for three millennia. Let's study it and see what we can learn. Notice this about courageous faith.

First of all, we see that it was born in secret and nurtured in solitude. As you read the Psalms it becomes clear that David delighted to be alone with God and his position as a shepherd provided hour upon hour spent in the beauty of God's presence. David's strong courage and faith come from periods alone with God, which are indispensable as faith builders. There are things God calls us to do and grow in together. Certain aspects of your soul can only be developed in communion with other persons, but other aspects can only grow in private fellowship with the Lord. It is in that private fellowship that we get to know God and come to understand that with all His power He is for us and behind us. He loves us. It was that assurance which David developed in secret that he took to the front lines before the masses and before Goliath. I believe David was so impressed with the greatness and majesty of God that Goliath really didn't seem so big. Honestly, when we are intimidated by others it is an indicator that we aren't that impressed by God. If I happen to be the president's right hand man, I won't be uptight around a governor. Listen to Proverbs 28:1 *The righteous are bold as a lion; but the wicked flee when no one is pursuing.* Why are the righteous bold you think? What is the psychology there? I think it must be because they know God is with them. It was this confidence that David had. It was born in secret and nurtured in solitude. If you would have David's faith, then try David's devotional habits. He said he meditated in God's word day and night. He met with God in the morning for worship and prayer and pondered His greatness in the night watches. Oh, we want a short-cut for everything but it's just not there. You want strength for your soul? Sorry, we don't have faith pills you can just swallow although if you stay up late at night you will likely see and ad for some. But God's power only comes with a good deal of chewing on the truths of His word and His ways. What have you done lately for your faith, in secret? Spent a morning in prayer? Gone for a long lonely walk on

the beach to talk with God? Oh, you may get through this week without that kind of thing, but will you be ready for the Goliath encounter? Phillips Brooks writes this: *Some day, in the years to come, you will be wrestling with the great temptation, or trembling under the great sorrow of your life. But the real struggle is here, now ... Now, it is being decided whether, in the day of your supreme sorrow or temptation, you shall miserably fail or gloriously conquer. Character cannot be made except by a long, continued process.* It was these oft-repeated times alone with God that prepared David for his public tests.

The second thing to notice about David's faith was that it was exercised in lonely conflict. 34-35 *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, <sup>35</sup>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."* The shepherd life was a lonely life. David's exploits with the lion and bear were great victories, but there was no applauding crowd looking on. No one but God. That is often the way it is. Our greatest tests may come when no one but God sees and knows. Those are the times when pride and glory-lust do not motivate, but those are the times that make us or break us. What are you like when no one is around? Are you motivated within to do what is right? Ultimately, you are nothing more than what you are in the dark, alone before God. And what we are when alone will come out in public, especially in time of crisis. David was courageous in public. But he passed the test in private. I think also of the disciples who scattered when Jesus was killed. Remember that? Peter denied the Lord. They failed in public and it was just the night before that they had been exhorted by Jesus to pray and what did they do instead? They slept when they should have prayed. Some folks SLEEP WHEN THEY SHOULD BE LISTENING TO THE SERMON!! But the disciples were sleeping instead of praying and then when the great challenge came the next day, they were not equipped to face it. David had courage to face Goliath because his faith was exercised in lonely conflict.

Thirdly now, see that David's faith stood the test of daily life. It is quite natural for us, some of us anyway, to want to be heroes. Many seem ready to do the heroic deed, exerting complete effort in order to come out as victor. But few are inclined toward faithfulness in the daily affairs of life. It is the hum-drum ordinary things we consider drudgery. We have no use for it. But we all have had to face it and how you do with the affairs of daily life will indicate how well you handle the less mundane.

David was soon to be the great deliverer of Israel. He was destined to rule the great nation. But in verse 17 he is still a boy-shepherd doing the hum-drum. God says, “faithful in little, faithful in much.” And we see the future king obeying daddy and doing his mundane work heartily unto the Lord. There once was a wealthy Ohio farmer, named Taylor, who was approached by a young man named, Jamie, asking for a job. Taylor hired him and allowed Jamie to sleep in the barn. Over the ensuing weeks and months, Jaime proved to be a hard worker and a valuable employee, so much so that he was even given responsibility for some of the other workers. One day Jamie came to Taylor and announced that he and the wealthy man’s daughter had fallen in love. The young worker asked Taylor for his daughter’s hand in marriage. Taylor was incensed at the impudent request of a mere worker and kicked the boy off the farm and out of his life. Years later, Taylor was cleaning in the barn and came to an area where Jamie used to sleep. There, when the straw was swept away he noticed that Jamie had carved his full name in the wood. It read: *James A. Garfield*. Taylor was astounded to find that his hard-working farm hand had gone on to become a general and then president of the United States. He should have recognized in the boy’s excellence at farm work the same basic character that would take him far in everything he did.

This was the kind of young man we have in David. In verse 17 and following we read of him carrying out the assignment of his father, to run a care package and some gifts to the front line. *20a So David arose early in the morning and left the flock with a keeper and took the supplies and went as Jesse had commanded him.* Imagine – this is a teenager getting up early in the morning. That’s a rare and precious quality. Then he took responsibility for his normal job by finding his own replacement and then he was about the special mission his dad had given him. He did as he was told, promptly and responsibly. He might have hoped to be sent in as a warrior but he wasn’t. Just so, you can’t always choose your area of service. You may want to be an elder in the church, but will you be a chair-mover and kids worship teacher now? You may want to be a teacher, but will you take the time to be a learner first? And, do it well? I remember a conversation with a man who told me he was frustrated because he was called as a teacher, but due to some relational indiscretions he had been suspended from his post. I encouraged him to find something else to do, maybe get involved in a prison ministry a friend of mine was leading in his town. Well, he gave me the old, “Are you crazy?” look. That man is now a bitter, ex-pastor. But you could see the seeds of that years ago in his attitude about the mundane. Many times God says this – you do well with little and I will honor you with more. If you use five talents wisely I’ll give you fifty. He says

too, “If you can’t handle money, how will you handle true riches?” He says elders must manage well their own homes and families, otherwise, how can they do the bigger job of leading the church? Deacons, it says, must first be tested. So, friend, if you aspire to spiritual greatness, and I hope you do, don’t neglect the mundane and the ordinary. The faith to deal with Goliaths can also stand the tests of daily life.

Fourthly now, we see that David had a courageous faith that was born in secret and nurtured in solitude, and a faith that was exercised in lonely conflict, and a faith that stood the test of daily life, fourthly now we note that David had a faith which survived criticism and negativity. 28 *Now Eliab his oldest brother heard when he spoke to the men; and Eliab's anger burned against David and he said, "Why have you come down? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your insolence and the wickedness of your heart; for you have come down in order to see the battle.* Eliab just attacks David for even thinking about taking on Goliath. Eliab not only tells David it is foolish, he accuses David of irresponsibility and arrogance. *"With whom have you left the sheep? You probably just ran off and left them you little squirt."* Then he rails on David for being conceited and arrogant. 29 *But David said, "What have I done now? Was it not just a question?"* I've said this before. Hmm? You ever been where David is? Likely so. Eliab is quite a character. He is the patron saint of people who assume evil motives. We all have the tendency to assume the worst of others. We think whatever Joe or Susie does is for self-advancement. And I tell you, one of the hard things about being a leader is having folks question your motives. You try to accomplish anything significant and somebody will question your motives. You may do something completely for others and get attacked for it. Hasn't that happened to you? I volunteered years ago to serve as president of our local Youth Basketball Association, a thankless job, with no pay and no perks, and two years into it I was accused of getting the office so I could stack my team with all the best players. The accusation was silly and baseless, but it can be so very discouraging. I mean, David was probably struggling with his flesh enough here. There had to be some reluctance to fight Goliath. Some part of him that said, “this is not safe.” His desires weren't self-seeking at all, but so he gets accused. That's a test of faith. It's hard enough to do what's right, but then to be thought evil for it makes it doubly tough. When that occurs, it will be a real test of your true motives. If you are doing it for God you won't be stymied by the accusations of people. You will count the abuse as part of the price of leadership, part of the price of stepping out for God. David

had the courage and faith to do what was right even though it was hard and even though it was criticized.

By the way, losers criticize the courageous. You've maybe heard of Robert Goddard the father of modern rocket science. In 1921 the New York Times wrote this: *Professor Goddard does not know the relation between action and reaction ... he seems to lack the basic knowledge ladled out daily in high-schools.*" Fred Smith, who founded Federal Express, was told by a Yale professor that the idea of an overnight shipping company was just not feasible. We tend to put down those who have more courage than us, especially when they are younger as well. It's easy to call a man of faith a dumb punk. It's been done thousands of times. Eliab did it. Who ever heard of Eliab? Anybody here named Eliab? How about David? Do we have any David's here? Interesting. I imagine there were some other non-famous older brothers throughout history, don't you? Older brothers who criticized the kid brother. Eddy Edison for example. He said, "Hah, Tommy, you and your bright ideas are going nowhere!" Ricardo Columbus possibly said, "I bet Chris is just hunting for girls with his big boat since no one here in Spain will go out with him." We could have a lot of fun imagining the negative big brothers. How about, George Disney who said, *"Wally how about you quit drawing little rodents and get a real job huh?"* Oh well, the point is to not be discouraged by that kind of thing. What real difference does it make what folks think of you? Don't let it stop you. Boldness, by the way, often seems arrogant. It does. At least to the cowardly and timid. And if you are afraid to appear arrogant, you may never be bold and courageous. I can assure you there were plenty of times when Moses and David and Elijah and even Jesus and His apostles did not come off to most as very humble, not in appearance maybe. Sometimes it is the case that pride wants to look humble. Humility only wants to please God.

David had to overcome the critical attack of Eliab, his older brother and then too he had to overcome the discouragement of the king. You wonder which was harder. 32-33 *David said to Saul, "Let no man's heart fail on account of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine."* <sup>33</sup>*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."* Boy that is some great encouragement from the fearless leader isn't it? He says, "forget it, you are just a cocky punk. You'll get squashed." Isn't that sweet? And encouraging? Especially coming from an older man. But frankly the voice of experience is often the voice of cowardice. That's why it is especially hard for the young to do daring things. Their elders usually scoff. That's why Paul had to tell Timothy in I Timothy 4:12 *Let no one look down*

*on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe.*

Look at what Saul says. He reasons just like Satan. *You can't do it. The obstacles are too great. Give up. Just remain mediocre.* Most people would feel relieved by such counsel. They'd say, "I guess you are right wise Saul." I mean, Goliath himself discouraged everyone else and now David, in addition to nine feet of intimidation on the battle field was facing opposition from the tag-team of Eliab and Saul. Most folks would have just wilted by now and spent the rest of their life thinking, "Well, I could have been something special if it weren't for Eliab and Saul." Some of you maybe, think that way. "If only my parents hadn't been so condemning. If only someone had cheered me along." If only, if only... always pointing to others as an excuse. Okay, some folks had more assistance than maybe you had, but you are not a slave to the Eliabs and Sauls. You can overcome that if you make God the center of your existence. I thought of Jesus – facing the greatest foe ever faced, the greatest trial ever endured, and how he had to endure Peter also coming along and saying, "*No, Lord, don't go!*" But, strong faith survives criticism and discouragement. David argues with his king. *36 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.* I love that! He fought through criticism and negativism. He's ready now to face the final foe – Goliath.

But hey, we don't have time to get to that today. You will have to wait until next week to learn what happens when David squares off with Goliath. You don't want to miss it. But as we close today I hope you can see this – the real battles we all face are within. Christ was victorious at Calvary because He won the battle within at Gethsemane. David's readiness to face Goliath was settled in his own soul before he ever picked up the slingshot. Your real battles are within yourself. Will you trust God, or listen to propaganda of the world, the flesh and the devil? Who or what are your scary Goliaths, your critical Eliabs, your discouraging Sauls? Like David, and like our Savior, listen to the voice of the One who is mightier than all. You do that, and you too may be courageous in faith.