

“FACING YOUR GIANTS”

by Rom A. Pegram (4/21/19 – Easter Sunday)

This may seem like an odd question to ask on an Easter morning, but how many of you have come to know and love the story of David & Goliath? Ever since I was a kid, I’ve loved this story. Something about the underdog winning is incredibly appealing. And, I love this story so much that ... each time I go to Israel, the Valley of Elah is one of the sights I refuse to miss; we have to go there. We have to see where this story took place... Max Lucado’s been there—many times ... and we’re going to let him help us get started today. Listen...

It was in that valley that David—a man after God’s own heart—met one of the biggest giants of his life—Goliath, staring down from the hillside... He and his bloodthirsty gang of hoodlums have turned their half of the valley into a forest of spears. Goliath towers above them all: nine feet, nine inches tall in his stocking feet, wearing at least 125 lbs. of armor, and snarling like the main contender at a WWF championship night. He wears a size-20 collar, a 10 ½ hat, and a 56-inch belt. His biceps burst, tough muscles ripple, and his boasts belch through the canyon (1 Sam. 17:10): “Here and now I challenge the Israelite army. I dare you to pick someone to fight me!” In other words, “Give me your best shot!”

No Hebrew volunteers. Until today. Until David.

David just showed up this morning. He clocked out of his sheep-watching job to deliver snacks to his brothers on the battlefield. That’s where David first hears Goliath defying God ... and that’s when David makes his decision. Staff in hand, he goes down by the creek. He picks up five smooth stones, puts them in his shepherd’s bag—a pouch that he wears, and with sling in hand, he moves closer to the Philistine...

Goliath scoffs at the kid. He nicknames him Twiggy. In verse 43, Goliath taunts: “What’s that stick for? Do you think I’m a dog?” Look at the contrast...

Skinny, scrawny David	vs.	Bulky, brutish Goliath
The toothpick	vs.	the tornado...
The minibike	taking on	the eighteen-wheeler...
The toy poodle	taking on	the Rottweiler...

What odds would you give David against this giant? Perhaps ... better odds than you give yourself against yours?

Today, folks, I believe each and every one of us knows our Goliath! We know the giant or giants that want desperately to bring us down in this life. Our giants, however, don’t carry a shield and a sword. Instead, they swing blades of...

- Fear
- Discouragement
- Guilt
- Resentment
- Doubt
- Failure

Your giant doesn't parade up & down the hills of Elah; rather, he stomps through your office, your bedroom, your classroom, and sometimes your barn. He brings bills you can't pay, grades you can't make, people you can't please, temptations you can't refuse, a past you can't shake, and a future you can't face! *You know your Goliath!* But, today, I believe if we really get to know the story of David's Goliath ... it'll help us deal with *ours*. *We need David's story—on this Easter morning. We need David's example. Most of all, we need David's God!* Listen to the first few verses of David's story on this Easter morning (1 Samuel 17:1-11, NLT)...

The Philistines now mustered their army for battle and camped between Socoh in Judah and Azekah at Ephes-dammim. ² Saul countered by gathering his Israelite troops near the valley of Elah. ³ So the Philistines and Israelites faced each other on opposite hills, with the valley between them. ⁴ Then Goliath, a Philistine champion from Gath, came out of the Philistine ranks to face the forces of Israel. He was over nine feet tall! ⁵ He wore a bronze helmet, and his bronze coat of mail weighed 125 pounds. ⁶ He also wore bronze leg armor, and he carried a bronze javelin on his shoulder. ⁷ The shaft of his spear was as heavy and thick as a weaver's beam, tipped with an iron spearhead that weighed 15 pounds. His armor bearer walked ahead of him carrying a shield. ⁸ Goliath stood and shouted a taunt across to the Israelites. "Why are you all coming out to fight?" he called. "I am the Philistine champion, but you are only the servants of Saul. Choose one man to come down here and fight me! ⁹ If he kills me, then we will be your slaves. But if I kill him, you will be our slaves! ¹⁰ I defy the armies of Israel today! Send me a man who will fight me!" ¹¹ When Saul and the Israelites heard this, they were terrified and deeply shaken."

This is Easter morning! We know the GOOD NEWS of Easter. We know the tomb was empty ... and remains empty today. Jesus had a GIANT to face, too; his GIANT was death (and we'll talk about that giant in this series too). But, what happened? Like David in his story, Jesus conquered that GIANT; he conquered death ... by giving what he had to God ... and trusting him for the rest!

Folks, the direction I'd like to move today is this: I want you to see in this story that David, like Jesus on that first Holy Week, had a choice—a choice like each one of us has—in each and every situation we face in life. Let's look at David's choices today:

DAVID COULD HAVE CONCENTRATED ON HOW BIG THE GIANT WAS! Goliath was a very large, mean, and scary man—the ultimate bully!!!! We described Goliath earlier as a huge man—very intimidating to look at, to experience—again, 9'9" tall, armor weighing in at more than 125 lbs, as sarcastic as they come, and absolutely defiant of Israel's God! But, there was something else just as aggravating on this day—the persistence of one of Israel's greatest enemies...

Folks, here's something that can grind on you ... and let me ask it in the form of a question. *How long has your giant or giants stalked you?* Here's something you may never have thought of, when it comes to the David & Goliath story...

Goliath's family were ancient foes of Israel; did you know that? **Joshua drove them out of the Promised Land three hundred years earlier...**

- He destroyed everyone except the residents of three cities: Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod—Gath being a real breeder of giants...
- Guess where Goliath was raised? Did you see the big “G” on his letter jacket? Gath High School...
- His ancestors were to the Israelites what pirates were to Her Majesty’s navy... I’m sure Saul was saying to himself, “Not again! My dad fought his dad. My granddad fought his granddad!”

Maybe you’ve said similar things in your life...

- “I’m becoming a workaholic just like my father...”
- “Divorce spreads in our family like a dreaded disease...”
- “My mom couldn’t keep a friend either; when is this ever going to stop?”

Folks, how long has your giant stalked you? Is it beginning to grind on you? Is it beginning to take its toll on your physical life, your emotional life, or your spiritual life? He stalked *your* ancestors ... and now he looms over YOU! Verse 11 (NLT) says, “When Saul and the Israelites heard this [from Goliath], they were terrified and deeply shaken.” Maybe you’ve been terrified of some of the giants in your life, too ... BUT, FOLKS, KNOW TODAY THAT *WE HAVE A CHOICE!* David could have concentrated on how big the GIANT was, but...

INSTEAD, DAVID CONCENTRATED ON HOW BIG HIS GOD WAS! David shows up, here in this story, discussing God; *did you notice that?* The soldiers in this story mentioned nothing about him & David’s brothers never spoke his name. But, *David pops onto the scene and immediately raises the subject of the living God!*

He did the same thing with King Saul; no chit-chat about battle plans or the odds they were up against ... just a God-birthing announcement: In verse 37, David tells Saul: “The LORD has saved me from lions and bears; he will save me from this Philistine.” ‘All right,’ Saul answered. ‘Go, and the LORD be with you.’ Then David continued his “God” talk with Goliath (**1 Sam. 17:45-47, NLT**)...

⁴⁵ David replied to the Philistine, “You come to me with sword, spear, and javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of Heaven’s Armies—the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. ⁴⁶ Today the LORD will conquer you, and I will kill you and cut off your head. And then I will give the dead bodies of your men to the birds and wild animals, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel! ⁴⁷ And everyone assembled here will know that the LORD rescues his people, but not with sword and spear. This is the LORD’s battle, and he will give you to us!”

Again, *no one else here discusses God. David discusses no one but God!* Do you see the sub-plot to this story? No longer just ... “David verses Goliath.” It’s now ... “God-focused verses Giant-focused!” *Are you with me?*

When the others in this story were majoring on the giant, David was majoring on God! David sees what others apparently don’t ... and refuses to see (at least in the same way) what others do! Again, the other Israelites’ focus was on the giant in front of them; David’s focus was on the HUGE GOD who was really in charge of the day!

Do you remember David's statement in V. 45? "You come to me with sword, spear, and javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of Heaven's Armies—the God of the *armies* of Israel, whom you have defied." Note *the plural noun—armies* ... of Israel. The common observer would only see *one* army of Israel, but not David. He sees Israel's allies on that day: platoons of angels ... and infantries of saints ... and the weapons of nature under God's control...

And, folks, don't kid yourselves. This is what Jesus did, too; otherwise he couldn't have gone through the horrific death of crucifixion ... for us. He faced DEATH concentrating *not* on the giant of DEATH, but on the HUGENESS (I made that word up) of His GOD. This is how Jesus defeated DEATH on that first Easter morning...

What is our focus going to be when our giants come out to play? Are our eyes of defeat going to be on the giants of our lives? Or, are we going to learn together how to keep our focus on our HUGE and MIGHTY GOD who's really in charge of the day?

Let me ask you this: In talking about your circumstances (the giants that loom in your life), ARE YOU MORE LIKELY TO DESCRIBE THE STRENGTH OF YOUR GOD ... OR THE GIANTS OF YOUR DAY? I count nine (9) references to God here, by David. God-thoughts outnumber Goliath-thoughts nine (9) to two (2). How does this ratio compare to yours? Do you think about God's grace more often than you think about the giants in your life? Is your list of blessings greater than your list of complaints? And, I'll ask again: ARE YOU MORE LIKELY TO DESCRIBE THE STRENGTH OF YOUR GOD ... OR THE GIANTS OF YOUR DAY?

This morning—and for the days ahead, *David is our man* ... and we're going to be using his example throughout the next several weeks to learn how to face *our* giants. Folks, as we close today—readying ourselves for the days ahead of us, don't forget the miracle of this day:

*Focus on giants ... you stumble.
Focus on God ... your giants tumble!*