

Facing the Giants

[Read 1 Samuel 17:45-51]

⁴⁵But David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with sword and spear and javelin; but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. ⁴⁶This very day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head; and I will give the dead bodies of the Philistine army this very day to the birds of the air and to the wild animals of the earth, so that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, ⁴⁷and that all this assembly may know that the LORD does not save by sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's and he will give you into our hand."

⁴⁸When the Philistine drew nearer to meet David, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine. ⁴⁹David put his hand in his bag, took out a stone, slung it, and struck the Philistine on his forehead; the stone sank into his forehead, and he fell face down on the ground. ⁵⁰So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, striking down the Philistine and killing him; there was no sword in David's hand. ⁵¹Then David ran and stood over the Philistine; he grasped his sword, drew it out of its sheath, and killed him; then he cut off his head with it. When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled.

Opening Image

Over 240 years ago a small collection of 13 colonies in North America declared its Independence on July 4, 1776 from England which was the largest superpower on Earth. Thus began the Revolutionary War.

Americans are David

The American colonies began the war with significant disadvantages compared to the British. They had no national government, no professional army or navy, no financial system, no banks, no established credit, and no functioning government departments, such as a treasury. The Congress

tried to handle administrative affairs through legislative committees, which proved inefficient.

The state governments were themselves brand new and officials had no administrative experience. In peacetime the colonies relied heavily on ocean travel and shipping, but that was now shut down by the British blockade and the Americans had to rely on slow overland travel.

At the onset of the war, the Americans had no major international allies. The new Continental Army suffered significantly from a lack of an effective training regime, and largely inexperienced officers and sergeants.

British are Goliath

On the other hand, the British entered the war with confidence. They had the world's most powerful navy, a well-trained professional army, a sound financial system that could pay the costs, a stable government, and experienced leadership.

When the war began, the British had 133 warships. The population of Great Britain and Ireland in 1780 was approximately 12.6 million while the population of the thirteen colonies for the same year has been estimated at 2.8 million including over 500,000 slaves. This was certainly a battle between David and Goliath.

Battle of Saratoga

There were numerous battles during the Revolutionary War with numerous heroes on both sides. Today I want to tell you about one soldier and one battle that proved to be the turning point of the war.

Timothy Murphy

On June 29, 1775, shortly after the start of the American Revolutionary War, Timothy Murphy and his brother John enlisted in the Northumberland County Riflemen, specifically Captain John Lowdon's Company. Their unit saw action in the Siege of Boston, the Battle of Long Island, and "skirmishing in Westchester".

After this, Murphy was promoted to the rank of sergeant in the Continental Army's 12th Pennsylvania Regiment and fought at the battles of Trenton and Princeton. Murphy was an "expert marksman", defined as being "able to hit a seven inch target at 250 yards". In July 1777, this skill led to Murphy joining Daniel Morgan's newly formed Morgan's Riflemen.

Morgan's Sharpshooters

Morgan's Sharpshooters were an elite light infantry unit commanded by General Daniel Morgan in the American Revolutionary War. They served a vital role executing difficult tasks because they were equipped with what was then the cutting-edge rifle instead of muskets. A gun with a rifled barrel allowed superior accuracy up to ten times the distance of the typical troops of the day.

Later in the year 1777, Murphy was selected as one of 500 handpicked riflemen to go with General Daniel Morgan to Upstate New York to help stop General John Burgoyne and the British Army. As the battles around Saratoga raged, the British, having been pushed back, were being rallied by Brigadier General Simon Fraser. Benedict Arnold rode up to General Morgan, pointed at British General Fraser and told Morgan the man was worth a regiment.

General Morgan called on Murphy and said: "That gallant officer is General Fraser. I admire him, but it is necessary that he should die, do your duty." Murphy scaled a nearby tree, took careful aim at the extreme distance of 300 yards, and fired four times.

The first shot was a close miss, the second grazed the General's horse, and with the third, Fraser tumbled from his horse. General Fraser died that night. British Senior officer Sir Francis Clerke, General Burgoyne's chief aide-de-camp, galloped onto the field with a message. Murphy's fourth shot killed him instantly.

The deaths of General Fraser and Sir Francis Clerke proved to be the turning point of the Battle of Saratoga and the turning point of the war. With the British commanders dead the British troops surrendered. Seeing this great victory the French and Spanish governments sided with the American colonists in their fight for freedom.

Summary

The American Colonies defeated a giant. And in our lives there are many challenges that seem like giants. We turn on the TV and see so many terrible things: war, terrorism, famine, disease, and injustice. We seem so small and the challenges seem so big.

Some of our challenges may be personal. Maybe you just received news that you have cancer. Maybe you have a giant hole in your heart because you have lost a loved one. Maybe you are fighting addictions. Maybe you are going through a divorce. Maybe you are lonely. We feel alone and unsure how we will face our challenges. It is so easy to give up and live in fear of each day.

Even as Christians, even as people of faith, we struggle with problems like these. I have giants in my own life that I'm struggling to deal with. So, what does the Bible say about facing giants?

Intro to the scripture

Our scripture today is a story about facing a giant. The giant in this case is a Philistine named Goliath. Goliath is a large man standing about 9 feet and 9 inches tall. He wore a coat of armor that weighed about 125 pounds. His spear had an iron point that weighed about 15 pounds.

Every day Goliath came out of the Philistine camp to taunt the Israelites. "He stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, 'Why have you come out to draw up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not

servants of Saul? Choose a man for yourselves, and let him come down to me. If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will be your servants; but if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall be our servants and serve us.' And the Philistine said, 'Today I defy the ranks of Israel! Give me a man, that we may fight together.' When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid" (1 Sam 17:8-11).

David

Meanwhile, David, the youngest of 8 brothers was summoned by his father to take food to his 3 oldest brothers who were with Saul and the army of Israel. David left his sheep to others and went to the front lines of the gathered troops. He saw and heard Goliath speak but this did not frighten David. In fact David was confident and spoke boldly saying that he could defeat Goliath.

Saul sends for David

Saul heard about David's confidence and sent for him. When David arrived in King Saul's presence King Saul was disappointed. Saul said to David, "You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for you are just a boy, and he has been a warrior from his youth" (1 Sam 17:33).

Saul relies on his sight and does not have faith. He sees a young boy who has no chance against a giant. Saul cannot see what David knows

about God but David remained confident because of his relationship with God. Saul sees, but David knows. Are you Saul, trusting only what you see? Or are you David, trusting what you know?

David has faith

David told King Saul he could face Goliath because God was with him. "But David said to Saul, 'Your servant used to keep sheep for his father; and whenever a lion or a bear came, and took a lamb from the flock, I went after it and struck it down, rescuing the lamb from its mouth; and if it turned against me, I would catch it by the jaw, strike it down, and kill it. Your servant has killed both lions and bears; and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, since he has defied the armies of the living God.' David said, 'The LORD, who saved me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, will save me from the hand of this Philistine.' So Saul said to David, 'Go, and may the LORD be with you'" (1 Sam 17:34-37)!

David has a well-established relationship with God. God has delivered David from danger on several occasions. David has faith that God will deliver Goliath into his hands. Saul is not so sure so King Saul sent David to be fitted with the king's armor.

Saul Doubted

King Saul still had his doubts and tried to put David into a heavy suit of armor. Saul placed his faith in man-made armor instead of the armor of God. David tries on the armor but it is too bulky. David rejects the king's

armor and goes to a nearby stream to select 5 smooth stones for his sling. He places the stones in a pouch along with his sling.

Sling

The sling is a powerful weapon. Among weapons of the Old Testament the sling was considered a powerful long range weapon second only to the bow and arrow. During the time of the Judges, the tribe of Benjamin had an army of 700 left handed slingers that could sling a stone at a hair and not miss (Judges 20:16).

David Confronts Goliath

David goes out from the front lines of the Israeli army and challenges Goliath. Goliath sees that David is little more than a boy and curses him. David sees the giant with all his armor and weapons but continues to have faith in God. "But David said to the Philistine, 'You come to me with sword and spear and javelin; but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This very day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head; and I will give the dead bodies of the Philistine army this very day to the birds of the air and to the wild animals of the earth, so that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the LORD does not save by sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's and he will give you into our hand'" (1 Sam 17:45-47).

David Defeats Goliath

How did the battle turn out? Look at verses (48-49). "When the Philistine drew nearer to meet David, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine. David put his hand in his bag, took out a stone, slung it, and struck the Philistine on his forehead; the stone sank into his forehead, and he fell face down on the ground. So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, striking down the Philistine and killing him; there was no sword in David's hand" (1 Sam 17:48-49).

David acted decisively and with faith because he knew that God was with him. David did not try to go around, over, or under Goliath. David went straight to Goliath and defeated the giant. This is the Good News.

Good News

The Good News is that we can face any giant because God is with us. King Saul struggled to place his faith in God. Saul put his faith in things that he could see while David placed his faith in the unseen God. And Goliath too! Goliath *saw* a little boy. Goliath *saw* an inexperienced warrior. But David knew that God was more powerful. David Knew that God would defend his people. What is our response?

Response to Good News

Our response to this Good News is to have faith in the face of our own giants. What are the giants in your life? Maybe your giant is: cancer, the

death of a loved one, addictions, divorce, or loneliness. Close your eyes and take a moment to think about your own giant.

How do you face your giant? Remember Saul acted on what he could see. Goliath acted on what he could see. But David acted on what he believed. And I'm going to tell you three things he believed in that day. And if you believe these three things, if you choose to believe them and focus your mind on them, then you can face your giant.

God is with you

First, God is with you. Emmanuel, God with us, is Jesus' very name. You're never alone. You will face difficulty but you're not by yourself. In Psalm 23 David said, "I will fear no evil for you are with me." David is courageous because David has faith in God. Have faith that God will be with you.

God will guide you

Second, God will guide you. David turns down King Saul's offer of swords and shields. David relies on his relationship with God knowing that God has delivered him in the past.

One of our biggest fears in facing giants is that we don't know what to do. We don't know which "weapon" to use. We're afraid we'll do the wrong thing and make the problem worse. But rest assured that if you will listen, God will guide you.

God's guidance is evidenced in this story through David's past experiences and his own unique gifts. David drew on what he had seen God do in the past. God helped David defeat both lions and bears. David used the gifts God gave him. He didn't try to be Saul with the armor. He didn't try to be Goliath with the spear. What God wants you to do is going to be consistent with the gifts God has given you. Have faith that God will guide you.

God will deliver you

Third, God will deliver you. David defeats this giant not by sword and shield but by his faith in God. David moves boldly and quickly. His sling delivers a stone in the exact spot needed to defeat Goliath.

Sometimes God's deliverance doesn't come WHEN we want it or HOW we want it. Deliverance doesn't mean an easy life, but that in the end God will prevail—if not in this life, then certainly in the next. Your giants will not have the last word. They may prevail for a time—just like Great Britain prevailed for a time. But in the end, God will have the last word. ***Have faith that God will deliver you.***

In the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Amen

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Battle of Saratoga

The Battle of Saratoga was one of the most important battles of the war. The Battles of Saratoga (September 19 and October 7, 1777) marked the climax of the Saratoga campaign giving a decisive victory to the Americans over the British in the American Revolutionary War.

British General John Burgoyne led a large invasion army up the Champlain Valley from Canada, hoping to meet a similar force marching northward from New York City; the southern force never arrived, and Burgoyne was surrounded by American forces in upstate New York.

Burgoyne fought two small battles to break out. They took place eighteen days apart on the same ground, 9 miles south of Saratoga, New York. They both failed. Trapped by superior American forces, with no relief in sight, Burgoyne surrendered his entire army on October 17. His surrender, says historian Edmund Morgan, "was a great turning point of the war, because it won for Americans the foreign assistance which was the last element needed for victory.

What giants have you encountered in your life? Mahatma Gandhi faced down the British government in India. Martin Luther King Jr stood against discrimination in America. In our scripture today, David and the small nation of Israel faced Goliath the giant of the Philistines.