

Lesson 45
The Challenge of Faith
Hebrews 11:32

Have you ever heard an older, more stayed Christian talk about a younger, more zealous Christian? The conversation might go something like this, “Why such and such is just a kid. He hasn’t lived long enough for God to use him. He is just a youth and not even dry behind the ears.” I am the first to agree that youths make many mistakes because they often have zeal without knowledge and experience, but it is not true that God does not use young people. God uses faith wherever He can find it, and often young people are willing to take risks of faith that older and more conservative Christians are not willing to do.

The Bible and history prove that God uses young people, even teenagers, to get His job done. God used Daniel and his three friends when they were still in their teens. It is thought that the Apostle John was around eighteen when Christ called him to salvation and apostleship. John Calvin was actively ministering at the age of twenty-two and wrote The Institutes of Christian Religion at twenty-six. Charles Spurgeon, probably the greatest preacher of all time, was preaching to his own congregation at the age of twenty.

David is an example of a young man who exercised great faith in the living God. David lived a life of faith in his long conflict with Saul, trusting God to give him the throne. He operated on faith after he was king in Israel in his dealings with his sons and enemies. It was faith that motivated David to make detailed preparations for the building of the temple. However, when David is mentioned in the Old Testament Hall of Fame of Faith, the author is probably referring to David’s spectacular victory over Goliath when, as a youth and inexperienced in the arts and guiles of warfare, he faced this mighty giant of war by faith and defeated him.

David had a great challenge before him, and he met that challenge by faith.

The story of David and Goliath is a true historical event, and it tells us how a young man, probably a teenager, was used mightily by God. This story is not just for young children in Sunday school, but it is recorded in Holy Scripture for all Christians to teach us about faith.

THE DESCRIPTION OF GOLIATH - 1 Samuel 17:1-14

17:1-3 - Using proper military position and tactics, these two armies were dug in on two separate mountains with a valley in between.

17:4 - Goliath was not a giant with his head in the clouds as we would think of the “Jolly Green Giant.” He stood 9’2” in height, which is a big man but not in the fairytale category. He was a gigantic man but not a giant. History records people nine and one-half to ten feet tall so this was not an unusual man for that day. Modern history records men of over eight feet.

17:5 - Goliath's armor weighed one hundred forty-eight pounds.

17:6-7 - His spear was huge, like a log or a weaver's beam, and weighed seventeen pounds.

17:8-10 - It is quite likely that the reason the Philistines wanted individual combat was due to Israel's superior army. Goliath defied every soldier in Israel, challenging them to do battle.

17:11 - There was not a man in all Israel that did not tremble at the sight of Goliath. Even Saul, who was a big man himself, a famous warrior and the King of Israel, was frightened. Saul lacked faith in God. He had his eyes on the situation rather than on the God who controls all situations. Fear is a natural emotion, but it is also a lack of faith in God. When we fear, we are denying that God can take care of us in any situation. We must learn not to look at the circumstances but to look at the God of the circumstances.

17:12-14 - David had three brothers, and all were on the front lines of battle. Perhaps they were officers in Saul's army.

THE PREPARATION OF DAVID - 1 Samuel 17:15-20

17:15 - David did not go to the front lines but went back to tending sheep. Now you might think that this was not an important job for David, and surely it was not as exciting and glorious as being a soldier in battle. However, this job for David was important training in order to get prepared to kill Goliath. While tending the sheep, he had time to meditate on the Bible and learn of his God. Furthermore, he had to protect the flock from enemies such as lions and bears. He had to learn to be faithful in the little things before God mightily used him.

God never sends a man to do something for Him without first preparing him for the task. Sometimes that preparation is learning to wait on the Lord. It seems that God puts a man on the shelf for a while to teach him humility, patience, and the sufficiency of God in all things.

17:16-17 - The time came, in God's timing, for David to go to the front lines. He did not go there as a soldier, but his father had him take some food to his brothers.

DAVID'S GREAT FAITH - 1 Samuel 17:21-30

17:21-23 - David greeted his brothers and got his first exposure to Goliath who is called the "champion" which means "one who treads down" or "a crusher." He was an awesome sight to behold!

17:24 - The superior army of Israel ran from this one man, Goliath. They had no real faith and had forgotten that the God of Israel is all powerful and always fights for His people when they trust in Him.

17:25 - The king gave a great incentive for someone to challenge Goliath. He said that any

person who could defeat Goliath would become financially independent, marry the king's daughter, and be free from paying taxes and military service. But there was no man that thought he could defeat the Philistine.

Surely it must have crossed some people's minds to take on Goliath, but their motivation was to be rewarded with riches and glory. They could care less about God's glory because they had no faith. But without faith, no man would take on the challenge.

17:26 - David immediately took a positive viewpoint because he had living faith in God. He said, ***"Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should taunt the armies of the living God?"*** David was concerned only for God's glory and not his own. He was jealous for the true God of heaven and earth. Where did David get this kind of faith? This faith came when he was meditating on the Bible and God while watching the sheep. It was when it seemed as though he was doing nothing for God that he was learning that God is all-powerful, and it was no problem for Him to kill Goliath.

Are you jealous for God and His work? Do you get concerned when you see the unsaved world mocking Christianity? Do you burn with righteous indignation when you see the unsaved triumphing in unbelief over true Christians? You should get concerned, and this should give you the challenge to exercise faith and glorify God.

If we are to have victory in spiritual battles, we must believe that God really exists, and, by faith, trust God to do a mighty work. ***"And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him"*** (Heb. 11:6).

17:28 - David's oldest brother showed his lack of faith in God and became very jealous of David. David showed great faith, and Eliab had a guilty conscience. He accused David of coming to the front lines out of curiosity for the sight of battle and for the smell of bloodshed.

We know that anytime a Christian exercises faith in God that he will be mocked by the unsaved and even sometimes by the saved. Men who truly exercise faith have to learn to walk alone, trusting only in God for strength.

DAVID'S GREAT VICTORY - 1 Samuel 17:31-51

17:31-32 - David volunteered to fight Goliath because he had real faith in God, for he knew, ***"If God be for us, who can be against us?"***

17:33 - Saul had no faith whatsoever and told David he was a runt and not skilled in war. He thought David "but a youth," and this sounds ever so familiar when older people look upon younger people.

A youth with faith is more potent any day than an older person without real faith. However, the older person with faith is more influential, because he has knowledge and wisdom behind him.

17:34-37 - David had been in basic training, preparing for this big battle with Goliath. He had been prepared by God for this spiritual task. David had killed a lion and a bear when protecting the sheep, and this Philistine would be just another notch in his sling shot. God had protected David when he was watching the flock, and God would protect David as he faced Goliath.

David was not afraid of death because he knew that whatever happened to him would be God's will. Yet, he was confident that God could, and would, deliver Goliath into his hands. David revealed the source of his power - the faithfulness of God. David's victory did not come from his faith per se but from God's faithfulness.

We can never have great faith until we have a great concept of God who is all powerful, all knowing, sovereign, eternal, and faithful. A big concept of God provides motivation for a big faith in God.

David learned to be faithful in the little things, and then God gave him bigger responsibilities. We do big things for God by learning to be faithful in the everyday tasks He sets before us. Do not think that God will give you a big ministry until you first learn to be faithful in the little things.

17:37b - Saul told David that the Lord would be with him, but it should have been obvious to Saul that the Lord was with David.

People who are not exercising faith in God cannot see God working in other people who are exercising faith in God.

17:40 - David took five stones because there were probably five giant-like men, and David intended to kill them all with one rock per man.

17:41-44 - Goliath mocked David and spewed out threatenings against him, but threats did not scare David because he knew God.

17:45 - David acknowledged that God alone, was the source of his power, for his weapons were spiritual and not carnal. *"... for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses"* (2 Cor. 10:4). It was in God's name. God's power, and God's authority that he would defeat this mighty Philistine.

17:46 - David declared what God would do through him to defeat Goliath. This act was to have worldwide effects, for through it "all the earth would know that there was a God in Israel." In every act of faith in the living God we display, we are somehow affecting the world for God.

17:47 - David's faith was also a testimony to all Israel that God lives and that He fights His battles supernaturally. David acknowledged that "The battle is the Lord's." David faced what appeared to be a humanly impossible situation, but he knew all things are possible with God.

The Lord can, and will, handle every spiritual battle, no matter how great or small, if we will acknowledge that the battle is the Lord's.

17:48-51a - David ran to fight Goliath, for he knew that God was on his side. With one throw of the rock from his slingshot, he killed the Philistine and cut off his head.

Who killed Goliath? David or God? Obviously God killed Goliath through David. David was merely the instrument God used to bring about His purpose.

17:51b - The Philistines ran in retreat when they saw their champion, Goliath, defeated.

When faith is exercised, the enemy is always put to rout, for it causes the enemy to see that God is real and is at work and that He is against them.

17:52a - David's divine viewpoint caused the people of God to rally, and they pursued the enemy, for they too saw that God was alive and working for them.

CONCLUSION

Saved

What giants do you have to kill in your life? The challenge of faith is before you, and you will not slay your giants until you exercise true faith in the living God. Perhaps your giant is a bad habit, or a moral problem, or a failure to let go of the material world. Still your giant may be a family problem, or the fear of death. Whatever your giant, it can only be killed by exercising positive faith in God. Your giant can only be slain by having a mind filled with a sovereign God and His purposes. Your giant can only be put to death as you realize that "The battle is the Lord's." Giant killers are people of great faith in the faithfulness of God. There is no giant in your life that cannot be killed if you will yield to the true and living God by faith.

Unsaved

If you are without Christ, the greatest challenge to you right now is your personal relationship to Jesus Christ. Do you believe Christ to be God, and have you yielded yourself to His lordship by faith? Do you believe Christ to be King, and have you turned from your old life to a new life in Christ by faith? Do you believe that Christ is the Savior, and have you accepted His death for your sin by faith? God only saves people by grace, through Christ, on the basis of faith in Christ. If you are without Christ, the giant that you must kill is the sin problem, which is a barrier between you and God. You can only kill that giant by placing your faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.