

*The Covenant Pulpit*



PURSUING THE HEART OF GOD

*"David, a man after God's Heart"*

"THE HEART OF CONFLICT"

1 Samuel 17

**June 20, 2010**

**Dr. Robert Petterson**

**Covenant Presbyterian Church**

6926 Trail Boulevard, Naples, Florida 34108

(239) 597-3464

[www.covenantnaples.com](http://www.covenantnaples.com)

Day after day a Philistine warrior lumbers out across the valley. He is the original *Incredible Hulk*—an awesome giant of a man called Goliath. He stands nine feet tall in his sandaled feet. He wears bronze armor that weighs more than 250 pounds. Altogether his enormous bulk, heavy armor, and weapons add up to some 600 pounds of fighting machine—one gargantuan mass of brass glistening in the hot Palestinian sun. In a word, he is *unbeatable!* The original *Iron Man*, mega heavyweight champion of the world, and Philistia secret weapon of mass destruction.

Strutting his awesome stuff, he belches boasts and blasphemies across the creek in a bass-profundo voice that sounds like twenty off-key tubas. The valley shakes as he defies the Israeli army with his daily taunt,

**“Choose a man, and have him come out and fight me!”**

The Israelites are hypnotized and paralyzed, cowering in fear behind rocks, unwilling to meet Goliath’s challenge. This goes on for forty days. Fast-forward 3,000 years. Not much has changed. Goliaths still lumber forth to challenge us. Like those ancient Israelites, we crawl out of bed in the morning and march boldly to battle. We bang on our shields, rattle our swords, and boast that *this* time we will overcome Goliath. Then the giant roars and our courage melts.

Maybe there’s one giant, bigger than all the rest. Daily he stalks you, and nightly he haunts you. You strike him dead, only to see him rise to terrorize you again. Goliath had four brothers, all of them giants too. Sometimes we have to fight several giants at once. You know their names: *Lust. Addiction. Fear. Worry. Depression. Bitterness. Pain. Discontent. Loneliness.* There are others just as ominous. The enormity of their power intimidates as they bluster, buffet, and beat you down.

I don’t know which giant (or giants) you are facing today. But I know that God wants you to overcome your Goliaths. He does *not* want his people to limp through life miserable and defeated. Do you know why? We bear his image. As children of God, we carry his name. As Christians, we belong to his Son. If we know anything about the heart of God, we know this for sure:

**God is jealous for his own glory.**

In Exodus 20:5 he says of himself, “For I the LORD your God am a jealous God...” In Isaiah 42:8 he adds, “I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not share my glory with anyone else!” The first question of the Shorter Catechism of our *Westminster Confession of Faith* asks, “What is the chief end of man?” The answer: “The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.” If God had a *Confession of Faith*, what would be his chief end? I think this would be the answer: “The chief end of God is to glorify *himself* and enjoy *himself* forever.” Everything God does is designed to give himself glory.

Defeated lives do not reflect his glory. Warriors who bear his name should never hide behind rocks in fear. His glory is in shepherd boys armed with slingshots and hearts full of faith, marching boldly out to topple giants. We learned in 1 Samuel 13:14 that God is looking for people “after his own heart.” From the time he was a boy, David pursued the heart of God. And now he pursues a giant. Do you want to have victory over your giants? Then seize this principle:

**Those who pursue the heart of God  
are jealous for the glory of God.**

Verses 8-11 tell us what the shepherd boy sees in the Valley of Elah:

“Goliath stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, ‘Why do you come out and line up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not the servants of Saul? Choose a man and have him come down to me. If he is able to fight and kill me, we will become your subjects; but if I overcome him and kill him, you will become our subjects and serve us.’ Then the Philistine said, ‘This day I defy the ranks of Israel! Give me a man and let us fight each other.’ Upon hearing the Philistine’s words, Saul and all the Israelites were dismayed and terrified.”

Had you lived 3,000 years ago, you would have understood that Goliath is appealing to an ancient code of combat called “**representative warfare**.” Each army picks a champion. The two meet on the field separating the armies and fight to the death. But this is more than a duel between two warriors. Each man not only fights in the place of his army, he also represents his people’s god. Ultimately this will be a battle between two deities: the god of the Philistines against the God of the Israelites—a stone idol called Dagon versus a Living God called Jehovah.

Do you realize why it is so pathetically tragic that the Israelites are cowering in fear behind rocks? Each of them not only says, “I don’t have what it takes to defeat the Philistine giant,” but worse than that, “My God does not have what it takes to conquer the Philistine god.” Every one of those forty days that they refuse to take up the giant’s challenge, they declare that a stone idol made with human hands is more powerful than the infinite God who created and governs the Universe.

David is ticked off—indignant that Goliath blasphemes his God and angry that his God has become so small in the eyes of his countrymen. He cries out in verse 26, “...who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God!” When he says, “this *uncircumcised* Philistine,” he is reminding the Israelites that circumcision is a sign of the covenant God made with Abraham. The circumcised belong to God and possess his promises and power. Goliath may be nine feet tall, but he is still *uncircumcised*. David is only a shepherd boy, but he is a *circumcised* shepherd boy. That’s why he can charge that giant

with this shout in verse 45, "You come against me with the sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel whom you have defied."

David knows that this battle is not between a little boy and a big giant, but a big God against a little idol. He teaches us that those who pursue the heart of God are jealous for the glory of God. This is why God's people have to come out from behind the rocks and face their giants. It is for God's honor that we people of the covenant fight our spiritual battles. It is for his praise that we press on until we overcome those sins, shortcomings, addictions, marital problems, and hypocrisies that keep us from reflecting *his* glory. Like David, we should be appalled that the Philistines would mock our God because those who bear his name live defeated lives. So how do we defeat our giants for the glory of God?

### **1. Realize that Jesus has already defeated every giant.**

The battle in this valley of Elah foreshadows a battle that will take place a thousand years later outside Jerusalem. David is the great type of Jesus in the Old Testament. Like Jesus, he is a shepherd. Like Jesus, he is born in Bethlehem. Like Jesus, he is the anointed king. Like Jesus, David is sent from his father's home. Like Jesus, he brings bread to feed his brothers in the wilderness. Like Jesus, he comes to his brothers only to be rejected. Like Jesus, he is not impressive to look at. And, like Jesus, he is passionately jealous for his heavenly Father's glory.

And who is Goliath? He is a picture of Satan. Like Satan, he is the accuser of God's people. Like Satan, he comes to intimidate and deceive them. Like Satan, he roams the valley like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Like Satan, he is overpowering. The Philistine god *Dagon* is called "lord of the flies" and Satan's name is *Beelzebub*, which literally means "lord of the flies." Goliath comes with his army of men and giants like Satan with his army of demons and giants.

The Israelites are God's people. They cower in fear, powerless to defeat this giant. In our own strength, we mere mortals are powerless to defeat the greatest fire angel ever created along with millions of demons.

But Jesus came from his heavenly Father. He faced the Goliath of all fallen angels in the great showdown at Golgotha. Jesus is called the rock. God looks forward to the cross in Genesis 2:15 when he says to Satan, "...he (Jesus) will crush your head and you will strike his heel." At the cross, that old snake Satan struck the heel of Jesus as the Roman spike was driven through his feet. But Jesus the rock also destroyed Satan's power. He crushed his head as surely as David's rock crushed Goliath's forehead. And, like the Philistine giant, Satan went down for the count.

It's amazing how much smaller a giant is in a prone position. When the Israelites saw him dead, they charged from their hiding places and

plundered the Philistine camp. David won the battle for them in the same way that Jesus won the battle for us. Satan and his giants no longer have any power over us. In Christ, we have authority to come out of hiding and plunder the enemy's camp.

David defeated Goliath because Christ defeated him 1,000 years later at that cross outside Jerusalem. And, Jesus defeated our giants 2,000 years ago. We have no business giving up or admitting defeat in any area. Like the Israelites of old, we proclaim God's glorious victory and seize the victory Jesus has already won for us.

## **2. Keep a right perspective on the size of the giants.**

King Saul is the biggest man in Israel. The Bible says that he stands heads and shoulders above everyone else. All others have to look at Goliath's belly button. At least Saul can look him straight in the chest. Saul may be the greatest warrior in Israel, but verse 24 says that he joins everyone else as "they *all* ran in great fear." Why does mighty Saul run away from the giant while the little David runs straight at him?

Look at what Saul says *about* Goliath in verse thirty-three: "You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a boy and he has been a fighting man since his youth." Contrast this to what David says *to* Goliath in verse forty-five: "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty." Did you catch the difference? Saul focuses on the size of the giant. David focuses on the size of his God. Saul takes one look at Goliath and says, "That giant is too big to hit!" David looks at him and says, "That boy is too big to miss!" The difference is in the perspective. David has grasped the glory of his God. Have you?

## **3. Build on the past glories of your God in your life.**

Look at David's response in verses 34-37 to Saul's skepticism that a little shepherd boy could take down a giant like Goliath:

"But David said to Saul, 'Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God. The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of the Philistines.'"

Before David faces the biggest giant of his life, he remembers other giants he faced in the past: the lion and the bear. Giants may change, but his God never does. They may get bigger, but they will never be as big

as his God. The God who was faithful in his *yesterdays* can be counted on in his *today* and *tomorrows*.

We are so prone to forgetfulness. God gets us out of one jam after another, performs one miracle after another, and answers one prayer after another—but, as soon as we face the next crisis, we come unglued.

Do you keep a journal of spiritual victories? David did. Most of his Psalms are written testimonies of tough times when God came through. The Bible is a record of thousands of years of God's faithfulness to those who faced giants. Read those stories when you are facing your giants. They will put steel in your soul. Read the biographies of men and women of faith who overcame great obstacles. Ask other Christians to share their testimonies with you. Saturate your mind with God's faithfulness in years past. Then, when you face the next Goliath, you can turn to your own lion and bear stories.

#### **4. Don't go in someone else's armor.**

Look at what happens next in verses 38&39:

"Then Saul dressed David in his own tunic. He put a coat of armor on him and a bronze helmet on his head. David fastened on his sword over the tunic and tried walking around because he was not used to them. 'I cannot go in these,' he said to Saul, 'because I am not used to them.' So he took them off..."

There is a profound principle here: what fits Saul isn't necessarily a good fit for David. We live in the age of formula Christianity. We study successful Christians and try to imitate them. I call it *Parrot* Christianity. But the truth is: Saul learned how to use his armor in the heat of his own battles. It *fit* him alone, and worked for him only. But David learned how to use a slingshot. Nobody in Israel could do that better—not even King Saul. In the solitude of tending his father's sheep, he experienced God. When he took his sheep through the *Valley of the Shadow of Death*, he learned that God alone was his Shepherd. In his wanderings he pursued God's heart until he possessed it. He showed that little shepherd boys with big hearts always defeat big giants with small hearts.

Armor for fighting giants doesn't come cheap. It's not as easy as putting on Saul's armor, for following someone else's formula battle strategies. Your armor has to fit you alone. It has to be forged in the heat of *your* battles, not Saul's, Dr. Petterson's, or anyone else's.

#### **5. Boldly make positive *faith* confessions.**

There are few things more powerful than words. God spoke and the universe came into existence. Jesus spoke and demons fled, the lame

walked, trees withered, and dead men came out of graves. The Holy Spirit speaks and the spiritually dead are born again. The Bible says that the power of life and death resides in our tongue. Negative confessions never produce victories. Look at Saul's words to David in verse thirty-three: "You are not able to go out against the Philistine and fight him; you are only a boy and he has been a fighting man since birth." The church is full of people like Saul: "I can't do it"; "We'll never be able to accomplish our vision in this bad economy"; "nothing can change my spouse or save my marriage"; "I just don't think I can survive this crisis." But notice David's words to Goliath in verses 46&47:

"This day the Lord *will* hand you over to me, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head. Today I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and the whole world will know there is a God in Israel..."

This is industrial-strength positive confession. He shouts it out for the whole world to hear. He declares victory before it ever happens. We need to do the same. The Bible is loaded with positive confessions. Memorize them. Recite them. Repeat them. Energize yourself with them. Cut out the negative self-talk. Discipline yourself to say the positive. It's God's will for you to overcome *all* the giants in your life so that he will get all the glory in your victories. So say it, and act on it!

## 6. Get to the giant before it gets to you.

There is a powerful strategy in verse forty-eight: "As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him." David didn't waste any time. Verse 48 says that he ran *quickly*. Contrast this with the rest of the Israelites. For forty days they listened to Goliath's intimidation. For forty days they sat on their hands, gripped by the paralysis of analysis. Every night they sat around the campfire and talked about how big he was. And the legend of Goliath grew. So did his size in their imaginations. He started out nine feet tall. By day forty he must have been 27 feet tall in their minds.

Mark this down: giants never get smaller or weaker over time. The longer we wait, the bigger they get. Look at the action sequence in verses 48-50. Blink and you'll miss it. Quickly the stone goes into the sling, and in a flash the stone smashes his skull. I think that the last thing Goliath must have said in his life was, "Nothing like this ever entered my mind before." Not only did David deal with this *quickly*, he dealt with it *completely*. Verse 51 tells us that he cut off the giant's head. He didn't take any chances that the stone had only knocked him out. Sometimes we only *partially* deal with the giants in our lives. We try to keep our bad habits and addictions manageable. We keep them like pets in a cage to take out whenever we feel the craving. Don't just *contemplate* overcoming the giant in your life. In the words of the *Nike* commercial: "Just do it!" Don't just knock the giant out temporarily with a rock, cut off its head once and for all.

## **7. Let the glory of God inspire those who are watching.**

Whenever I wonder if it's worth it to take on the giants that often defeat me, I want to remember the battle postscript in 1 Samuel 18:1&4:

“After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David and he loved him as himself...Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his tunic, and even his sword, his bow, and his belt.”

Jonathan was the crown prince of Israel and a man of valor. But he too was afraid to fight Goliath. Maybe he hoped that his father Saul would be brave enough to take on the giant. But Saul disappointed his son. I believe that Jonathan was ashamed of himself, his dad, and his people.

But, when Jonathan sees David defeat the giant, his faith is restored. At that moment his heart is knitted to David's. In a moment he loves David as much as himself. More than that, he takes off his royal clothes and puts them on David. This is a breathtaking moment. In effect, Jonathan is setting aside his claim to Israel's throne and declaring David to be the new crown prince—the future king of God's people. David has saved him, and now he is the Lord of his life.

Isn't this a wonderful picture of Christ and us? We have seen him defeat all our giants. He has saved us. And we love him for that. Our hearts have been knitted to his. We have declared him to be our Savior, King, and slayer of our giants.

And there are others, like Jonathan, watching us. They have been unable to defeat the giants that have come against them. We live in a world of defeated Jonathans. They can't overcome the giants of Lust, Fear, Worry and Insecurity. They are enslaved to materialism. They are bound up in addictions. Their marriages are falling apart. They don't know how to live at peace in a world of economic collapse and ecological crisis. But when they see the glory of God overcome the giants in our lives, they are drawn to the LORD whose glory we jealously pursue.

So go out and pursue the heart of God. Along the way, slay some giants. Remember, Jonathan is watching.