

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

NOVEMBER 11TH-12TH, 2023 // 1 SAMUEL

GOLIATH OF GATH (1 SAMUEL 17:1-11)

The old enemies of the Israelites, the Philistines, have returned to threaten the peace and go to war against Israel (vs. 1).

- We don't know exactly how much time has passed between chapters 16 and 17, but it hasn't been too long because David is still an adolescent.
- Chapter 17 begins with the Philistines assembling their army at Ephes-dammim.
- Saul and his army gathered and camped on the hill that stood opposite Ephes-dammim.
- Both of these armies had assembled their camps facing each other with a ravine between them (vs. 3).
- Out of the ranks of the Philistines came a champion named Goliath from Gath who stood nine feet, nine inches tall (or "six cubits and a span," vs. 4).

There's a discrepancy in some of the ancient manuscripts concerning Goliath's height. Some say, "four cubits and a span" (6' 9"). Others say, "six cubits and a span" (9' 9").

- A cubit (18 inches) was measured by the length of the arm from the elbow to the top of the middle finger, and a span was the tip of the thumb to the top of the little finger (6 inches).
 - This system of measurement isn't exact.
- Even if Goliath was "only" 6' 9", the average height for a man was about 5' 3"—5' 5" (and David was described as shorter than normal).

- It's not unreasonable to believe that Goliath was a legitimate giant. The Bible refers to giants on many occasions, describing groups like the Rephaim, Zuzim, Emim, and the Anakites as giants (Goliath was from Gath, so probably descended from the Rephaim).

Ancient Egyptian writing describes Canaanite warriors who were seven to nine feet in height. There were two female skeletons about seven feet tall excavated at Tell es-Sa'idiyeh in 1964 in the Jordan Valley.

- Families of giants have been described in medical literature, and modern archaeology gives evidence that giants did exist in this part of the world.
- Imagine how terrifying it must have been to know that one of these giants was the champion of your enemy's army.

In ancient warfare, often two representatives ("champions") were chosen to do battle on behalf of their respective armies.

- Goliath of Gath demanded that Israel send out their champion to fight against him (vs. 8—10).
- This was not a fair fight at all! For starters, Goliath's enormous size made things unfair.
- Goliath also had superior weaponry and armor (vs. 5—7).

For any Israelite warrior without armor, proper weaponry, and physical stature, this was a suicide mission.

- When King Saul and the army of Israel heard this challenge from Goliath of Gath, they were absolutely terrified (vs. 11).
- Before the battle even began, Israel was demoralized because of the fear and terror Goliath crippled them with.

THE PARALYZING POWER OF FEAR.

Some of us have mastered the art of looking tough on the outside, but on the inside, we're often crippled and demoralized by fear.

- We have a real enemy who hates us and doesn't want us to live in freedom or victory and especially doesn't want us to live out our calling in the Kingdom of God.
- Our enemy operates in the currency of fear.
- Fear often prevents us from experiencing peace, joy, or hope in our relationship with God.
- Fear often prevents us from living in obedience to God and stepping out in faith to do battle for the Kingdom.
- Conquering fear doesn't start with looking inwardly and then staring down your fear; it starts with your faith in God and His strength.

DELIVERING A CARE PACKAGE (1 SAMUEL 17:12-24)

David was apparently too young to join his brothers in military service.

- David's three oldest brothers had joined Saul's army, but David was still responsible for tending his father's flock in between his trips to Saul's palace to play music for him (vs. 12—15).
- For forty days, Goliath of Gath would come every morning and evening and taunt the army of Israel (vs. 16).

Every day for 40 days, the men of Israel would hide in their tents, and no challenger would step forward.

- One day, young David was sent by his aging father with food rations for his brothers and to check on their well-being (vs. 17—19).
- David arrived just in time to see the Israelites lining up in battle formation opposite the Philistines and shouting their battle cry (vs. 20—21).

Suddenly, David sees the champion Goliath step forward from the Philistine battle line.

- David then hears the disturbing taunts and challenge of Goliath (vs. 23).
- More disturbing than Goliath's challenge was the fact that all the Israelite soldiers retreated in fear and terror when Goliath came out.
- Israel had a history and heritage of God delivering them from helpless situations.

The story of the Exodus is a testament to the fact that even the most powerful civilization and military presence in the world was no match for the God of Israel.

- God had delivered Israel through Gideon from the Midianites when they were greatly outnumbered (Judges 6—8).
- God had even delivered Israel from the Philistines at Mizpah just a few years earlier (1 Samuel 7).

When we face an unexpected challenge, difficult situation, or scary set of circumstances we can so easily forget the faithfulness of God in our past.

- Fear can become all-consuming and prevent us from clearly seeing God's ability to save and deliver us.
- The answer is a clearer revelation of the character and faithfulness of God.

CONFIDENCE IN GOD (1 SAMUEL 17:25-32)

Since no one was willing to step forward and face Goliath, Saul offered a three-part bribe to anyone who would fight that included a cash reward, Saul's daughter in marriage, and a tax exemption (vs. 25).

- All the troops were focused on the rewards and talking about it, but none of them were willing to actually do anything because of their fear (vs. 27).

The men of Israel seemed to be focused on the danger of the battle and the material rewards to be won, but David's concern was on the reputation of Israel and the honor of the living God (vs. 26).

- David saw the matter through a spiritual vantage point, not simply a physical perspective.
- To David, this was God's battle—Goliath was no match for the God of Israel!

Eliab, David's older brother, hears David's conversation and is greatly angered (vs. 28).

- Eliab accuses David of being arrogant, evil, and having no right as a shepherd boy to come to a battlefield and discuss such matters.
- Perhaps the reason why Eliab was so angry at David was because David's boldness exposed his own cowardice—David was right, and his courage was convicting to Eliab.

There are a lot of Eliabs within the church who misunderstand, judge, and discourage other believers who walk in boldness and faith.

- Often, their criticism comes from a place of guilt and conviction over their own inactivity and cowardice—they don't have enough boldness or obedience to do something for the Lord, but they will sit on the sidelines judging those who do.

In spite of Eliab's criticism and discouragement, David kept talking about the issue at hand with anyone who would listen (vs. 30).

- Eventually word got to Saul that there was a young man bold enough to not cower in fear and run away from the giant Goliath (vs. 31).
- David stood before Saul and said something quite ridiculous coming from a teen boy, "Don't let anyone be discouraged by him..."

"YOUR SERVANT WILL GO AND FIGHT THIS PHILISTINE" (VS. 32)!

- The good news for Saul is that he's found a champion willing to fight Goliath. The bad news is that it's a scrawny teenage boy!
- David is not just saying, "Somebody should trust God enough to stand up to Goliath," but, "I will trust God enough to stand up to Goliath!"
- The real giant is not Goliath—it's the unbelief and fear in the hearts of the people of God.

WE WILL ALL FACE GIANTS IN OUR LIVES.

"In this world you will have trouble." (John 16:33, NIV)

- In our lives, we will face...
 - Trials, temptations, and struggles.
 - Death, disease, and disasters.
 - Persecution, pain, and poverty.
 - Criticism, discouragement, and loneliness.
 - Impossible circumstances or situations.

JESUS IS OUR CHAMPION (NOT YOU).

"...take heart! I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)

- Jesus stood as our representative and conquered the giant of sin and death that we were powerless against.
- Because of His victory, if we are His, someday, all the things in our lives that are difficult, painful, confusing, and sad will come to an end.
- In the meantime, God offers us strength, peace, and hope in the face of our battles.

WHEN WE UNDERSTAND THE VICTORY THAT IS OURS IN CHRIST, OUR FEAR GETS EXPOSED FOR WHAT IT IS.

- F.E.A.R. - "False Evidence Appearing Real"
- For the Believer, fear of anything but God is an illusion and has no real power over you.
- What if your greatest fears, whatever they may be, are actually lies?

WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF YOU WEREN'T AFRAID?

- The Church was given a promise by Jesus that we'd play offense, not defense (Matthew 16:18).
- We are to stand up to and attack the darkness through sharing our faith, living out our Christian witness, serving the poor, helping the needy, loving the broken, and seeking the lost—we can't do that when we're afraid of the dark.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF YOU WEREN'T AFRAID?

- Think of how different our church and our community would be if God's people were bold enough to believe, obey, trust, and follow God without fear!
- God never intended for you and me to live crippled by worry, fear, or anxiety (2 Timothy 1:7).
- The Bible contains over 300 instructions not to fear—are you listening and believing God?