



Studies in the life of David

Text

First Samuel 17:1-39

Topic

David is stunned that none of the older men in Israel's army are willing to accept the challenge to fight the giant, Goliath

Title

"You Fight Like an Old Man"

Introduction

Two relatively 'old men' have won heavyweight boxing championships:

- George Foreman was 45 when he knocked out Michael Moorer to reclaim the title.
- Evander Holyfield, at age 47, just won the WBF title on April 10, defeating Francois Botha.

Their exploits give new meaning to the phrase, *"You fight like an old man!"*

There is a realm, however, in which fighting like an old man always brings defeat. It is the realm of the spirit, of walking with the Lord, of spiritual warfare.

In the New Testament letter to the Colossians, in chapter three verses eight, nine and ten, we read,

But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off **the old**

man with his deeds, and have put on **the new man** who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,

It describes our old way of living, before we were Christians, as “the old man,” urging us to rather yield to an entirely new way of living, “the new man.”

On one level these are things done for you by the Lord at the moment you were saved. The “old man” is rendered impotent and you receive a new nature, a divine nature, the “new man.”

On a practical level, you to be “renewed in knowledge.” It describes the process of progressive change - doctrinally called *sanctification* - by which the indwelling Holy Spirit is transforming you day-by-day. He does it by “knowledge,” that is, by you getting to know and know about Jesus more each day by interacting with Him primarily in the Word of God.

In the realm of the spirit, of walking with the Lord, of spiritual warfare, we choose day-by-day and moment-by-moment whether to fight like the old man or like the new man.

We see this principle illustrated for us in the preface to David’s facing Goliath.

- Two older men, Saul and Eliab, who ought to have challenged the Philistine giant, represent ‘the old man.’
- David, the unlikely champion, represents ‘the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him.’

I’ll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 You Won’t Defeat Giants If You Fight Like The Old Man, and #2 You Will Defeat Giants If You Fight Like The New Man.

#1 You Won't Defeat Giants
If You Fight Like The Old Man
(v1-30)

'Giants' come in all shapes and sizes. We shouldn't think only in terms of occasional monumental spiritual challenges. For any of us some seemingly minor struggle may be a giant issue we face on a daily basis. If we're not experiencing victory, spiritual victory, then perhaps we are fighting like the old man, employing his tactics and strategies, rather than those of the new man.

First Samuel 17:1 Now the Philistines gathered their armies together to battle, and were gathered at Sochoh, which belongs to Judah; they encamped between Sochoh and Azekah, in Ephes Dammim.

First Samuel 17:2 And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered together, and they encamped in the Valley of Elah, and drew up in battle array against the Philistines.

First Samuel 17:3 "The Philistines stood on a mountain on one side, and Israel stood on a mountain on the other side, with a valley between them.

There was almost perpetual war between Israel and the Philistines. It certainly reminds you of the on-going struggle you face as a Christian between the flesh and the spirit. As you read in Galatians 5:17, "For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish."

There is no middle ground, no compromise, in this battle. It's one or the other, the flesh or the spirit. We either bring forth the works of the flesh or we yield to the inner workings of the Spirit of God to produce spiritual fruit.

First Samuel 17:4 And a champion went out from the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath, from Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span.

First Samuel 17:5 He had a bronze helmet on his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail, and the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of bronze.

First Samuel 17:6 And he had bronze armor on his legs and a bronze javelin between his shoulders.

First Samuel 17:7 Now the staff of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and his iron spearhead weighed six hundred shekels; and a shield-bearer went before him.

He was over nine feet tall. His coat of armor weighed around 200 pounds - more than David weighed dripping wet. His spearhead alone weighed 20 pounds. He was imposing.

And he was intimidating:

First Samuel 17:8 Then he stood and cried out to the armies of Israel, and said to them, "Why have you come out to line up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and you the servants of Saul? Choose a man for yourselves, and let him come down to me.

First Samuel 17:9 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."

First Samuel 17:10 And the Philistine said, "I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together."

Goliath was a real warrior, a real giant of a man. What he illustrates for us is that our battles cannot be won using any of the natural means available to us. Whether it is an addiction or a life-dominating sin, it's bigger than you are. There's no equipment in the world that can help you. You must trust in the Spirit of God, as David will.

First Samuel 17:11 When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid.

They were afraid because they heard "these words of the Philistine." They ought instead to be hearing, in their hearts, the Word of the Lord.

First Samuel 17:12 Now David was the son of that Ephrathite of Bethlehem Judah, whose name was Jesse, and who had eight sons. And the man was old, advanced in years, in the days of Saul.

First Samuel 17:13 The three oldest sons of Jesse had gone to follow Saul to the battle. The names of his three sons who went to the battle were Eliab the firstborn, next to him Abinadab, and the third Shammah.

First Samuel 17:14 David was the youngest. And the three oldest followed Saul.

First Samuel 17:15 But David occasionally went and returned from Saul to feed his father's sheep at Bethlehem.

David had earlier been called to soothe King Saul by playing his harp when an evil spirit troubled him. When war broke out, David returned home while his three oldest brothers followed King Saul into battle.

First Samuel 17:16 And the Philistine drew near and presented himself forty days, morning and evening.

A lot of significant spiritual things are associated with forty days in the Bible:

- Moses was on the mountain twice for a period of forty days.
- It took the spies forty days to search out the Promised Land and return with its fruit.
- Jesus fasted forty days in the wilderness.

In our context we're being shown that David had forty days to prepare for his encounter. Only he didn't know he was preparing, did he? But God did.

Even in our daily, mundane activities we ought to consider ourselves in spiritual training, being prepped by God for what is coming in a day, or a week, or longer.

First Samuel 17:17 Then Jesse said to his son David, "Take now for your brothers an ephah of this dried grain and these ten loaves, and run to your brothers at the camp. First Samuel 17:18 And carry these ten cheeses to the captain of their thousand, and see how your brothers fare, and bring back news of them." First Samuel 17:19 Now Saul and they and all the men of Israel were in the Valley of Elah, fighting with the Philistines.

Were they "fighting with the Philistines?" At first glance it seems they weren't fighting at all because they were refusing Goliath's challenge.

Truth is, they *were* fighting - only they were fighting like the old man. They had adopted a battle strategy of doing nothing!

You can't stand still and hope to hold your spiritual ground. Indeed, Charles Swindoll points out that by verse twenty-five Goliath is said to have "come **up** against" the Israelites. In other words, he was advancing a little every day, crossing the valley and taking ground against them.

Stir up the gift that is in you. Run the race. Exert every spiritual effort in your walk with the Lord.

First Samuel 17:20 So David rose early in the morning, left the sheep with a keeper, and took the things and went as Jesse had commanded him. And he came to the camp as the army was going out to the fight and shouting for the battle.

First Samuel 17:21 For Israel and the Philistines had drawn up in battle array, army against army.

First Samuel 17:22 And David left his supplies in the hand of the supply keeper, ran to the army, and came and greeted his brothers.

First Samuel 17:23 Then as he talked with them, there was the champion, the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name, coming up from the armies of the Philistines; and he spoke according to the same words. So David heard them.

First Samuel 17:24 And all the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him and were dreadfully afraid.

First Samuel 17:25 So the men of Israel said, "Have you seen this man who has come up? Surely he has come up to defy Israel; and it shall be that the man who kills him the king will enrich with great riches, will give him his daughter, and give his father's house exemption from taxes in Israel."

Understand that Saul, as king, ought to have gone out against Goliath. He didn't match-up well against the giant, but Saul was the tallest man in Israel - standing a head taller than others.

In the life of a believer, to lead means to serve. A believer who always wants to lead without really serving is living in the old man. Period.

In place of obedience, Saul sought a substitute. Someone else to do the work.

We are all to give, to pray, to fast. All of us are called to do the work of ministering to others. If we don't, then we are acting like Saul, living according to the old man, not being led by the Spirit to walk in the new man.

Saul adopted strategies from the world around him. He offered "great riches," "his daughter," and "exemption from taxes." It's sad when we try to entice folks to serve, or bribe them in some way, when offering our lives as living sacrifices is what we ought to be emphasizing.

First Samuel 17:26 Then David spoke to the men who stood by him, saying, "What shall be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?"

First Samuel 17:27 And the people answered him in this manner, saying, “So shall it be done for the man who kills him.”

First Samuel 17:28 Now Eliab his oldest brother heard when he spoke to the men; and Eliab’s anger was aroused against David, and he said, “Why did you come down here? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your pride and the insolence of your heart, for you have come down to see the battle.”

First Samuel 17:29 And David said, “What have I done now? Is there not a cause?”

First Samuel 17:30 Then he turned from him toward another and said the same thing; and these people answered him as the first ones did.

We’ll talk about David in a moment. First we see some more traits of the old man in his big brother, Eliab.

When we read the characteristics of the ‘old man’ in Colossians, first on the list was “anger,” and that is exactly how Eliab is described. He went on to display a wide range of fleshly characteristics.

Eliab served under Saul. Eliab represents the kind of believer that is produced by those who walk according to the old man. They have a million excuses as to why they aren’t doing anything to further the kingdom. They’re full of criticism for those who are. They think themselves somehow superior.

Eliab could have accepted the challenge. In fact, he should have. David shamed him. Don’t be put to shame because of your preference for the old man and his ways.

Enough of that; you get the idea. Let’s see David and the new man.

#2 You Will Defeat Giants If You Fight Like The New Man (v31-39)

These are the first words David speaks in First Samuel. “What shall be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?”

How do you read this, with what inflection? I read it like this: **“What!!!”** In other words, why does anything need to be “done,” or offered, since *any* Israelite in covenant relationship with God should go out against the giant.

Remember I mentioned earlier that Saul and the Israelites “heard” the words of Goliath? David had been forty days out in the fields hearing the Word of the Lord. Thus his first, his immediate, response was faith rather than fear.

First Samuel 17:31 Now when the words which David spoke were heard, they reported them to Saul; and he sent for him.

First Samuel 17:32 Then David said to Saul, “Let no man’s heart fail because of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine.”

David presented himself a “servant” for the sake of every other man in that camp. He was willing to put it all on the line for the sake of others.

Notice two things:

1. These were not the kind of guys that inspired you to risk everything. They were disobedient at best, and antagonistic at worst. David served as unto the Lord and not men!
2. David had not “fought” with a Philistine before. He was willing to trust the Lord, to believe that God had prepped him for this very thing.

Facing overwhelming odds, and faced with under-whelming companions, David stepped-up for the Lord.

First Samuel 17:33 And Saul said to David, “You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for you are a youth, and he a man of war from his youth.”

We get a little more from Saul regarding the old man. The old man walks in the flesh and, so, sees only things from a natural, from a worldly, perspective. He is not open to what the Spirit is doing. He applies his own wisdom and not God’s leading. Saul was ‘right,’ from a strictly natural perspective; but he couldn’t be more wrong!

First Samuel 17:34 But David said to Saul, “Your servant used to keep his father’s sheep, and when a lion or a bear came and took a lamb out of the flock,

First Samuel 17:35 I went out after it and struck it, and delivered the lamb from its mouth; and when it arose against me, I caught it by its beard, and struck and killed it.
First Samuel 17:36 Your servant has killed both lion and bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, seeing he has defied the armies of the living God.”
First Samuel 17:37 Moreover David said, “The Lord, who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.”

Notice David didn't mention his skill with the sling and stones. He said, “I caught it by its beard, and struck and killed it.”

David understood that when he had defeated lions and bears, it was not in his own strength or by his own cunning. No, the Lord came upon him to give him the victory. The lesson he had learned was that when you yield to the new man the foe didn't matter. It could be a lion, it could be a bear, it could be a giant. Nothing could match-up against a Spirit-empowered person of any age, size, or natural ability.

Do we really believe that the Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead lives permanently within us? If so, we know that no foe can match-up.

Charles Spurgeon wrote:

Do you know the way in which God rewards his faithful servants here on earth? He does it usually by enabling them to do in the future something more than they have done before. You have fought in the battle. Take this as your reward - you shall fight again tomorrow!

David kept referring to Goliath as “this uncircumcised Philistine.” Physical circumcision was the outward sign of the covenant relationship an Israelite had with God. It's David's way of saying, “greater is He that is in me than he that is in the world.” It was his way of saying that all battles are essentially spiritual battles won on a spiritual basis in relationship to Jesus.

First Samuel 17:38 So Saul clothed David with his armor, and he put a bronze helmet on his head; he also clothed him with a coat of mail.

Saul just wouldn't give-up! He just didn't get it.

The old man just won't give-up. He'll *never* get it. You must constantly determine to yield to the Spirit of God rather than give-in to the flesh.

First Samuel 17:39 David fastened his sword to his armor and tried to walk, for he had not tested them. And David said to Saul, "I cannot walk with these, for I have not tested them." So David took them off.

I can't fault David for initially putting on the armor. There may be times when, for the greater good, you might go along (to a point) with something you don't feel entirely comfortable with. For example: Whenever an evangelistic crusade comes around, there is the possibility you might be working alongside groups that are normally more given to 'old man' style tactics. Everyone has to draw the line of cooperation for themselves.

David shows them that the armor is restrictive. That's a gracious way of throwing-off the trappings of the old man. In your walk show those who trust in him that those ways restrict and hinder and inhibit.

David "took them off." We are to "put off the old man" and "put on the new man."

I share this quote, by J.C. Philpot (1867):

The new man has the same faculties of a man as the old man has. He has eyes, and by these eyes he sees Jesus; he has ears, and with those ears he hears the gospel of salvation and drinks in the precious sound; he has lips, and with these lips he blesses God; he has a tongue, and with his tongue he praises the name of the Lord, speaks of the glory of his kingdom, and talks of his power; he has hands which are open to bestow liberally on the poor and needy; and he has feet which are swift to walk, yes, to run at times, in the way of God's commandments when he has enlarged his heart. Thus the old man employs every member in the service of sin, and the new man employs every member in the service of God. Now, as when we are under the influence of the old man, we do, or at least we are tempted to do, what he may suggest, so when we are under the influence of the new man, then we gladly do what he inclines us to do according to the will and word of God.

We are to fight like the new man and, when we do, giants fall.

