



Studies in the Life of David

Text

Second Samuel 21:15-22

Topic

Four Philistine giants are defeated by David and his men

Title

“Effacing the Giants”

Introduction

Last November Bill Nye, the host of the Emmy-winning 1990s TV show *Bill Nye the Science Guy*, fainted mid-sentence in front of hundreds of audience members during a speaking engagement at the University of Southern California.

The fainting spell of Marie Osmond on *Dancing with the Stars* (Season 5) took the show by surprise. One minute she was smiling at the judges' table, and the next minute she fainted and was on the floor.

King David was involved in a more serious situation when we read in our text that he “grew faint.” He was engaged in hand-to-hand combat with a Philistine giant. One of David’s men, Abishai, came to his aid and struck down the giant.

David’s near fainting spell can serve to remind us as believers in Jesus Christ that there is a kind of spiritual fainting that occurs. We’re told, for example, in Galatians 6:9, “And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we **faint** not.”

Spiritual fainting is also referred to in the KJV translation of Second Corinthians 4:16, Ephesians 3:13, and Hebrews 12:3 & 5.

While we are told to not faint, it is assumed we will fight to the point of growing faint. In other words, the way to avoid fainting is not by avoiding fighting (or we might say, serving). No, truth is if we are really in the fight, really pressing forward, there will be times in which, like David, we grow faint. In those times we look for help from others God has raised-up around us.

I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 You're In A Fight That Will Lead To Fainting, and #2 Take Up The Fight For Those Who Are Fainting.

#1 You're In A Fight That Will Lead To Fainting (v15)

The great Baptist preacher, Charles Spurgeon, has a chapter in his book, *Lectures to My Students*, that is titled, "The Minister's Fainting Fits." Listen to his description of fainting.

Usually cheerful as we may be, we must at intervals be cast down. The strong are not always vigorous, the wise not always ready, the brave not always courageous, and the joyous not always happy. There maybe here and there men of iron, to whom wear and tear work no perceptible detriment, but surely the rust frets even these; and as for ordinary men, the Lord knows, and makes them to know, that they are but dust.

... the children of light sometimes walk in the thick darkness... the heralds of the daybreak find themselves at times in tenfold night.

Spurgeon called fainting "depression." I had rather use the term "discouragement" because of all the psycho-babble that surrounds the modern use of the term "depression."

Call it what you will, it seems that it is the common lot of Christians who are busy serving the Lord, who are engaged in the fight, to grow weary in their well-doing and come to the point of fainting.

No less a warrior than David "grew faint."

2 Samuel 21:15 When the Philistines were at war again with Israel, David and his servants with him went down and fought against the Philistines; and David grew faint.

You could always count on one thing in Israel, and it was that the Philistines were going to want to fight you. They “were at war **again**,” and you might just say, “still.” When Israel wasn’t fighting them they were planning on fighting them.

It’s a reminder, is it not, that we as believers in Jesus Christ are engaged in one long campaign against fierce foes that will last until we see the Lord face-to-face. The world, the flesh, and the devil keep coming at us, and in new and unusual combinations. Until you wake up in Heaven you are not going to wake up to a day in which the world isn’t against you, or your flesh isn’t making its demands to be sinfully satisfied, or the devil has decided to leave you alone.

“David and his servants with him...” In David’s case these “servants” were other fighting men - mighty men, warriors who had been tested in battle. We’ll have more to say in a moment about having other battle-tested believers around us to take up the fight when we grow faint. But even without them, we have ‘servants’ to stand with us in the fight.

The Word of God can serve us in the fight. When the devil came against Jesus in the wilderness the Lord relied upon the Word of God to serve Him in the exchange.

The Spirit of God is a servant to us. Jesus promised each believer that He would send to be within us “another Comforter.” We might think of ‘comfort’ as something to soothe the weak after they’ve been defeated, but ‘comfort’ is a word that denotes strength. The indwelling Holy Spirit comforts us by reminding us we are seated in Heaven with the Lord and have access to every spiritual blessing His death and resurrection have provided us.

Even without the intervention of other warriors we are never without servants!

“David... went down...” He took the fight to his enemies. He didn’t wait around for them to be strengthened. He wasn’t willing to yield any ground to them.

“David... fought against the Philistines.” In the New Testament the apostle Paul exhorted young Timothy to “fight the good fight of faith” (1 Timothy 6:12). At the end of his own life Paul could say,

2 Timothy 4:7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:

Are you in the fight?

- Are you more separated from the world today than you were yesterday; or is the world creeping in past your defenses?
- Are you hacking away at the flesh or are you indulging its lusts?

Inevitably there comes a time when you will grow faint in the battle. David did.

There are any number of reasons why you might grow faint. Just looking at David, here are two.

First we might note that the fight went on-and-on, year-after-year, with no end in sight. Every time you defeated the Philistines they regrouped and returned. Every time you felled one of their giants, they sent another to replace him.

One reason we sometimes faint is that we seem not to be gaining any ground.

Maybe that’s true but it’s something to not lose ground also; to defend what we have gained and to repel the attacks against it.

Or, similarly, it seems that our ‘fight’ is something so mundane, so repetitive, as to render our life somewhat dull and boring.

Day-after-day it's the same old same old. It doesn't seem like we're in the fight at all. We can get discouraged and want something different, something we think we might even deserve, when, in fact, this is the fight God has definitely called us to wage and win.

You see, I'm not talking just about, or even primarily about, serving the Lord in some ministry in the Church. I'm talking about serving Him at home, at work, at school, in your everyday life. That's where the battle can seem so endless that you grow faint looking down the corridors of time.

A second reason David grew faint might have a physical connection. It is suggested by commentators that David was getting older and was too old to fight. While that is possibly true, the text doesn't really blame David's age. It doesn't say that he was old and should have stayed behind. It's an assumption, probably a good one, but not a certainty.

I think we assume David was old and should have retired because we want to think we can retire from the fight! We think we can get to the point where we've put in our time, done our service, and now it's 'me' time. No, as we'll see getting older only means you shift roles and, in some ways, you take on more.

Let's say for the sake of argument that David was too old physically to go out and face the giants. Most of us as we age are going to be touched by some physical infirmities. Some of us worse than others. It is the human condition.

Nothing can contribute to fainting more rapidly than a serious or chronic infirmity. Yet even in the midst of it we may rejoice. After all, the apostle Paul was stricken with some infirmity and after seeking the Lord for its removal it was revealed to him that it was for his good and God's glory.

Having said that I am quick to add that infirmities of this nature will continue to be a source of our growing faint. It cannot be helped though it can be overcome in the Lord and by His strength.

The Bible wouldn't tell you to not faint unless it was something you were prone to. It doesn't tell us in order to defeat us, but to remind us we are in a serious struggle against powerful foes.

Have you grown faint? Hopefully it is because you have been in the fight, wielding the sword of the Spirit, holding up your shield of faith, gaining or at least holding ground against the world and hacking away at the flesh. The devil keeps looming as a giant who refuses to concede defeat but you stand against him anyway.

#2 Take Up The Fight For Those Who Are Fainting

(v16-22)

David once faced and felled a giant alone. Well, not alone because it was in the Lord that he defeated Goliath. But he was by himself as to other warriors.

In our story David was part of a fighting force. There were others like him in the sense of being focused on victory.

For us it can be an encouragement that God can provide, and probably has provided, other Christians to stand with you in the fight.

2 Samuel 21:16 Then Ishbi-Benob, who was one of the sons of the giant, the weight of whose bronze spear was three hundred shekels, who was bearing a new sword, thought he could kill David.

The phrase that keeps repeating in these verses, "the sons of the giant," can be translated, "the sons of the Rephaim." Let me read to you this entry from a Bible encyclopedia.

[The Rephaim were] a race of aboriginal or early inhabitants East of the Jordan in Ashteroth Karnaim (Genesis 14:5) and in the valley of Rephaim Southwest of Jerusalem (Joshua 15:8). They were the aborigines of Palestine, afterwards conquered and dispossessed by the Canaanite tribes, are classed under this general title. They were known to the Moabites as Emim, i.e., "fearful", (Deuteronomy 2:11), and to the Ammorites as Zamzummm. Some of them found refuge among the Philistines, and

were still existing in the days of David. We know nothing of their origin. They were not necessarily connected with the “giants” (R.V., “Nephilim”) of Genesis 6:4.

A couple of things about Ishbi-Benob:

1. One, “he was bearing a new sword.” Now the original language doesn’t specify it was a “sword.” It only indicates he had some new weapon. The world, the flesh, and the devil will come against you with their massive “bronze spear,” things you’ve seen before, but also with new weapons you may not be ready for. Stay on your guard.
2. Two, the text says he “thought he could kill David.” He couldn’t! He was already defeated. Our foes are already defeated, at the Cross of Jesus, but they are relentless.

2 Samuel 21:17 But Abishai the son of Zeruiah came to his aid, and struck the Philistine and killed him. Then the men of David swore to him, saying, "You shall go out no more with us to battle, lest you quench the lamp of Israel."

Abishai was right there, ready and willing to defend his king and defeat the giant.

There can be times when you are in the battle alone. Man, can those cause you to grow faint! In those times think of David versus Goliath.

The encouragement here is to be surrounded by other warriors who can come alongside you in the fight.

By the way, on a personal note, I’m pretty excited about what the Lord has done and is doing in our fellowship along these lines. Let’s say David was old. God raised-up younger men to come alongside. The Lord has done that here. And, not only that, the younger men are raising up even younger men!

David’s men decided it was time he put full attention to his role as king and leave giant killing to them. What a great encouragement you can be to someone by helping them.

Only you have to really help them! Sometimes the help we render makes things worse. You need to fell the giant not create new ones.

David's men were faithful as evidenced by the rest of the chapter.

2 Samuel 21:18 Now it happened afterward that there was again a battle with the Philistines at Gob. Then Sibbechai the Hushathite killed Saph, who was one of the sons of the giant.

As we said, the Philistines just wouldn't stop coming. They had a new giant. David had a new hero.

You know something? ***You can be a hero or heroine.*** But you need to be in the fight.

2 Samuel 21:19 Again there was war at Gob with the Philistines, where Elhanan the son of Jaare-Oregim the Bethlehemite killed the brother of Goliath the Gittite, the shaft of whose spear was like a weaver's beam.

This may seem repetitive to us, almost ho-hum, but these were real exchanges in which your life was on the line. The giant was going to fall but you still needed to fight. His spear was going to whistle past you but you had to dodge or be impaled.

2 Samuel 21:20 Yet again there was war at Gath, where there was a man of great stature, who had six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot, twenty-four in number; and he also was born to the giant.

2 Samuel 21:21 So when he defied Israel, Jonathan the son of Shimea, David's brother, killed him.

An even bigger, weirder giant faced off against David's men. Same result.

2 Samuel 21:22 These four were born to the giant in Gath, and fell by the hand of David and by the hand of his servants.

Interesting. David didn't kill any of them but is credited with the kills along with his fighting men.

One lesson to learn is that we are at our best when we don't care who gets credit for our serving. In fact, a lot of spiritual fainting occurs *because* I feel overlooked or don't get the attention or credit I think I deserve.

Spiritual fainting sneaks up on you. It is common to us all. Don't let it keep you out of the fight. If there is no one to help you, rather than grow even more discouraged see your trouble as Goliath and know that the Lord's strength is sufficient for you.

If you see others fainting, come alongside of them. Stand with them. Fight with them or for them. Don't assume that Goliath is their foe but rather his brother whom **you** are called upon to fell.

