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**Scriptural Background – 1
Samuel 17:22-50.**

**THE NEW YEAR AND
GIANTS**

We have entered the year 2009 with a world in confusion. All about us are men and women whose hearts are failing them for fear of the crises in which they find themselves. The economic state of our world has left thousands in dire financial straights. Many have lost their life's savings. The corruption and greed of men is at an all time high. There are wars and rumors of wars which strike hopelessness into the hearts of nations. Hundreds of thousands are dying of starvation across the world. Thousands upon thousands of Christians are being martyred for their faith. In the midst of all there are those whose sole ambition in life is to acquire political power. They grasp at it at any price, even to the sacrificing of their

principles, and are not concerned about who they hurt or destroy on their way to the top. The moral and spiritual values of our Judeo-Christian heritage are in a tailspin. Absolute values are fast becoming thing of the past.

And so as we survey the boiling cauldron of events in our world, the temptation is to become defeatist in our attitude to life. It seems that there is no light in the darkness about us, and no hope of the redemption of our society. The gigantic problems with which we are surrounded are seemingly insurmountable, and so we are tempted to ask "is there a way out of all of this?" This raises a critical question for the Christian. "When everything about us seems to be crumbling, what should be our stance in life be? How should we react? Dr. A. Gossip, a great preacher of a former day, preached a sermon at a very difficult time of his life entitled "**When life tumbles in what then?**" This is a good question and an extremely relevant one. As the "world tumbles in about us what then?" We must give thought to finding an answer to this question. While we as Christians are facing enormous difficulties of gigantic proportions, are we to retreat and become defeatist? Are we to allow the giants in life intimidate us and destroy us?

"Can we be more than conqueror day by day?"

It might helpful to look the great Old Testament story in 1 Samuel 17:22-50 that has inspired and excited the minds of young and old alike all down through history. The shepherd boy David had been sent by his father to take food packages to his older brothers and to the commander of their unit. It would no doubt been an exciting adventure for young David, as he left the boredom of tending his father's flocks, and made his way to the front lines where the children of Israel were at war with the Philistines. There could have been a glint in his eye and lightness in his step as he anticipated seeing his brothers again. Possibly he would get to see a battle, and as he would come to the valley where the soldiers were, he would thrill to see the encamped armies. On the one side would be the Israelites and the other the Philistines. But when he arrived he discovered that all was not well with the armies of Israel. He found them cowering in their tents for fear of the enemies of Israel, the Philistines. The Israelite army was in crisis. They were fear ridden, and the focus of their fear was the giant Goliath. Day after day he would appear and challenge someone from the ranks of the Israelites to do battle with him. This had been going on for forty days

when David appeared on the scene. There was no question that Goliath was a formidable enemy and a fierce foe. And Israel could not produce a champion to fight for them, for who could compare in size and ferocity with this giant. So no one was willing to challenge and do battle with this mighty warrior of the Philistines. But when David heard about it, the size and fierceness of the giant did not seem to bother him at all. He certainly did not minimize the seriousness of the problem that faced the nation. But it is significant, however, that his concern was not the size of the giant, because he asked almost scornfully, "who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?" This was a question that revealed the heartbeat of David's trust in God. To David it was unthinkable that a giant no matter what his size or disposition, could defy, discourage and defeat the armies of the living God. His conviction of this was so strong that he offered himself as the champion of the army of the Lord. Do not forget that David was not a trained soldier, but that did not deter him, not because he was arrogantly self-confident, but because his confidence was in God. If this story teaches us anything, it teaches that one individual with a full trust in God, can make a

positive difference in the midst of the crisis. It assures us that there will be victory in midst of the most impossible circumstances.

It is clear that David encountered two enemies in his visit to the battlefield. The obvious one was the external enemy. There was an enemy on the outside facing the nation. The Israelites were at war with the Philistines, and they had come to an impasse in the confrontation. The Philistines had chosen their champion to do battle with the chosen champion of the Israelites. The nation whose champion was defeated would then be ruled by the nation whose champion won. The difficulty was, however, that no one in Israel was willing to face the Philistine giant. Even the King of Israel cowered in his tent.

You may recall a moment in the Israelites history when they were really not satisfied with God as their King, and so they asked Him to allow them to have an earthly monarch. God through his servant Samuel warned them about what earthly kings would do to them. And the scripture tells that the people refused to listen to Him. "No" they said, "We want a King over us." 1 Samuel 8:19-21, 20. They continued, "Then we will be like other nations, with a king to lead us and go out

before us and fight our battles." God granted their desire. The serious mistake they made, was that they wanted to be like other nations. Those nations were heathen and idolatrous nations, who did not worship or honor "**the Living God.**" It is always a disastrous step to take when the people of God want to be like the sinful society about them. Destruction is on the way when we compromise with the world so as not to offend it. It is a clear recipe for defeat. The Israelites got their king, but now in the crisis where was he? Was he not supposed to go before them and to lead them into battle? 1 Samuel 8:20. Where was he? He too, was cowering in his tent.

Having said this, the giant was not to be underestimated. He was a formidable foe. He was described as a fierce enemy who was 9ft tall. He wore a bronze helmet and his coat of armor weighed about 125lbs. The point of his spear weighed about 15lbs, and in this way he presented himself as ferocious and daunting enemy. The nation saw no way out of their predicament. But in David's mind there was nothing to convince him that the giant was invincible. He believed as Paul said many years later, "If God is for us who can be against us?"

While it was true that the giant was overpowering there was an

enemy more insidious, more destructive and more malignant than any external enemy. It was the internal enemy. No army can confidently and victoriously face an external enemy while there is an internal enemy. The enemy without must not be allowed to create an enemy within. The giant had aroused fear in the Israelite camp. This enemy had eroded the courage and sapped the strength of the armies of Israel. Fear and doubt had gripped their hearts and minds. 1 Samuel 17:24. Fear is the birth child of doubt or lack of trust. The real enemy here was unbelief. They had lost their vision of God and His power. The might and power of the giant filled their vision. They were so giant conscious that they lost their God consciousness. When the nation saw the giant they "ran away from him in great fear." They had placed their faith in the ability of their king, but he was hiding in his tent. Now because he failed to confront the giant, it seemed that all was lost and fear invaded their ranks. They thought they had no else to fight for them. The king was in his tent and no champion was found in Israel. This fear produced panic and paralysis. So they were defeated before they fought a battle. The Apostle Paul wrote that the victory which overcomes the world is faith. When fear dominates the heart and mind

faith moves out. Fear and doubt are close companions. Fear had crippled them and defeat was inevitable. David surveyed all of this distress, but he still did not understand why the pagan giant could defy the armies of the Living God and get away with it. Why was there no one to challenge the giant Goliath?

As you follow the story you discover that for being so young David was extremely wise and discerning. It is clear that he did not limit the whole of life to the limits of one problem i.e. Goliath. He viewed the one giant in the light and context of life as a whole. But more importantly, he viewed the one giant in the light of the majesty and might of the God he served. He knew Him to be the Sovereign Lord, high and lifted up and in complete control of all things. In David's mind that cut the giant down to size. It placed the giant in a proper perspective. He acknowledged **"the Living God"** as the center of life, and his trust in this God was total. This is the Christian perspective. Life lived with this vision, is the foundation of peace about the future, no matter how bleak, and guarantees victory in the battle.

David's discerning perspective was, in part, a result of the redeeming activity of God in the experiences of his life. A study

of his words in verses in 1 Samuel 17:32-37, will reveal why David was so discerning and so strong in his faith. First you will discover as he faced this crisis,

a. That he looked back on God's activity in his life, and **found confidence. 1 Samuel 17:33-34, 36.** What is so striking about David is that he was eager to fight the giant while the Israelites hid in their tents. There was a confident faith in him. There was no doubt in his mind that he would win the battle, and so he was not distracted or deterred from his mission. King Saul himself said to him "you are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him, you are only a boy." But David found confidence as he looked back on his life and recalled how the Sovereign Lord had helped him through all crises. He told of how he had been tending his father's sheep when on two separate occasions a lion and a bear had made off with his father's sheep. He quickly pursued them and destroyed them, and these are his concluding words in reply to King Saul's discouraging words 1 Samuel 17:36. "Your servant has killed both a lion and bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God." David looked back on his life and remembered how God had faithfully helped him in

hours of crises. He looked back in faith and gave him confidence to face the giant in the present. Note too,

b. That He looked in and found courage. 1 Samuel 17:26, 31-32. It not occur to David that the armies of the living God would back down in the face of this giant. Defeat was not in his thinking and certainly not on his agenda. David looked within and found courage. David was only as courageous outwardly as he was inwardly. He mustered all of the courage within himself in order to act with courage outwardly. In 1 Samuel 17 verse 32, He said to King Saul, "Let no one lose heart on account of the Philistine; your servant will go and fight him." David looked within himself and found courage. This was not a grandstand play on the part of David. The giant with whom he had to contend was real formidable enemy. Adrian Rogers tells about a man who bragged that he had cut off the tail off a man-eating lion with his pocket knife. Asked why he hadn't cut off the lion's head, the man replied: Some had already done that. Goliath was no dead giant. He was strong and powerful – a warrior of the warriors! He represented the dangerous possibility of defeat and destruction for the Israelites. Someone with courage had to eliminate him.

David was the man to do it. Courage resided in himself and he went out to slay the giant. There was within David the courage to face the enemy and destroy him. But David also

c. Looked forward to conquer. 1 Samuel 17:46.

David faced the giant and said to him, "This day will the Lord hand you over to me and I'll strike you down and cut off your head." What audacity that was!! But it was the audacity of an unflinching courage. This is the language of a conquering faith. It is the spirit of a man whose faith rests in the unshakable power of God. It is the kind of faith, as Charles Wesley would say, "Laughs at the impossibilities and cries it shall be done." Genuine faith looks forward to conquer. While David recognized that the giant was a danger to the nation, his faith looked forward to conquer the giant. In the shadows of his faith and courage, stood God watching over him and he knew it. To the man of faith there is no defeat. The hymn writer's words breathe with faith and courage. "Crowns and thrones may perish – but the church of Jesus will remain – Gates of hell can never, against the church prevail. We have Christ' own promise which can **NEVER** fail," The hymn writer clinched the truth when wrote, "We have Christ's own promise which can never fail." For He said "on this

rock I will build my church and the gates of Hades will NOT overcome it." Note the certainty of the words "The gates of Hades will not overcome it." Whether it is the church as a whole or Christian as an individual facing a crisis, victory is promised. Therefore like David we should, with confidence, look forward to victory. Note what he said to the giant, "this day the Lord will hand you over to me, and I will strike you down." David faced the giant with confidence. He looked back and found confidence – looked in himself and found courage - and he looked forward to conquer – and conquer he did!

Now what was the secret of David's victory in the crisis? There is no doubt that David had a complete trust in the power of God. 1 Samuel 17: 37, 45-47. His faith in the God of Israel was strong and robust. What is so striking about this story is that the crisis he faced immediately evoked the response of a complete confidence in the power of God. His first response was not fear, or the thought of retreating to the tents, but amazement that God's people exhibited a lack of faith in the power of God to defeat the giant. He was appalled that the armies of Israel cowered in their tents while Goliath defied them. This should not be was David's

position. That is why he asked the question, "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God." David's perspective keeps the crises in balance. The issue was not how the problem looked to David, but how did it look to God. David viewed the crisis in the light of God's presence and power. The question was, "Was the elimination of the giant to difficult for God to handle?" David believed that with God all things are possible and so the Giant would be eliminated. To believe this solves a multitude of problems. Since he believed that there were no crises designed to defeat God, where would be the reason for fear and defeat? He did not doubt the seriousness of the problem, but he recognized a factor that overshadowed his problem. It was the God factor. Because this had been settled in his mind and heart, the crisis could be faced without fear or defeat. It is abundantly clear that David did not question God's omnipotence; he simply trusted it and then acted upon it. His response to the critical situation that faced the nation was not to acquire the latest weapons, but rather to declare his complete trust and confidence in the **"Living God."**

The story tells us that King Saul tried to equip David with his own armor, but it did not fit

him. David said "I could not fight in these." and so he "took his staff and five small stones from a stream, and put them in the pouch of his shepherd's bag, and with the sling in his hand, approached the Philistine." What David had did not seem to be much of an arsenal, and even the giant was scornful for when he looked David over and saw that he was "only a boy, ruddy and handsome. he despised him. He said to him "am I dog, that you must come to me with sticks?" 1 Samuel 17:42-43. He put his faith in his size, his armor and his weapons, and it was natural that he would despise a small boy, a few stones and a sling." "What could David do against the giant with latest military equipment of that day?" The giant's full trust was in himself and the weapons of the world. His attitude sums up the perception of the world. "Get the biggest, the best, and the latest in weaponry to win the victory." Let us gather together all the wisdom of the world. Let us organize all the strength and power of the flesh. Let us build up a formidable arsenal of human weaponry. Small boys with a sling and few stones will not do it. The human mind runs down these pathways. But God's word says simply yet powerfully, "that God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He

chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things – and the things that are not – to nullify the things that are.” 1 Corinthians 27-28. This is what David discovered

It is striking that a man so young had developed such insight and discernment. His words in 1 Samuel 17:45-47 reveal that he understood the values and principles of the living God. What he said to Goliath in essence, was that “you can come against me with all the weapons the world has to offer,” “But I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty and the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. 1 Samuel 17:45. This day the Lord will hand you over to me and I will strike you down..... And the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel.” V. 46. The climax of his challenge to Goliath is telling. “All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord’s, and he will give you into our hands.” V.47. With these words he slew the giant.

As we face the Year 2009 and look around our world, we discover that we are surrounded by formidable giants. The future is dark and uncertain. This is true on the global scene, but it may also be true on the personal level. Is it possible that

there are giants in our lives who appear to be overpowering and seemingly invincible? Maybe they are striking fear into our hearts. We wonder what will happen to us as we move out into the new year. “Will we succumb to power of these giants, and will we allow them to overwhelm us with despair and defeat?” The unshakable principle reinforcing and undergirding the courage and the faith of young David, was his vivid awareness that the “battle is the Lord’s.” This is the assurance and confidence of the Child of God. As we face an unpromising and uncertain future with all of its enemies, remember that “the battle is the Lord’s. Since this is so, it is unreasonable for the Christian to be a defeatist? There will be giants to overcome in our spiritual warfare but “Why fear them?” There is no Biblical reason or rationale for despair. Did not Paul testify that in “All these things we are more than conqueror through Him who love us?” Romans 8:37. It is still true in the year 2009, that “if God is for us, who can be against us?” Romans 8:31. In this confidence we can defeat our personal giants and live the life of the “more than conqueror.”

May God bless you, and may you all have a blessed New Year.