

New Year's Eve – Facing Your Giants

12/31/17 – Pastor Randy

1 John 5:1-5 (NLT)

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has become a child of God. And everyone who loves the Father loves his children, too. We know we love God's children if we love God and obey his commandments. Loving God means keeping his commandments, and his commandments are not burdensome. For every child of God defeats this evil world, and we achieve this victory through our faith. And who can win this battle against the world? Only those who believe that Jesus is the Son of God.

The language of overcoming is pervasive in the NT. In Revelation 2-3 those who are faithful to Christ are described as the ones who “conquer” or “overcome” or “are victorious”.

How many of you saw the movie Facing the Giants? That movie has resonated with so many people because it is a story about overcoming life's challenges. But the real challenge that the movie addresses is the challenge to not be overcome by the disappointments that threaten to discourage us and cause us to lose hope. What I especially liked about the movie was that it correctly identified the purpose of the Christian's life; to glorify God with our lives. God doesn't exist to help us overcome challenges that prevent us from achieving prestige for ourselves, attaining pleasure for ourselves, and acquiring possessions for ourselves. We are not the center of the universe. The world does not revolve around us. It revolves around the S-O-N. When John wrote about “defeating the world” or “overcoming the world”, he was referring to everything in the “world” that stands in opposition to God and God's will; everything that hinders us from loving God and His people.

This is not a talk to inspire you to believe in your potential. I am not here to inspire you with motivational type rhetoric such as, “You got this”, “You can make it”, “You have what it takes to be anything you want to be, do anything you want to do, achieve your wildest dreams, attain your greatest goals.” My purpose for the next hour is to persuade you to trust in God. You and I don't

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need more faith in ourselves, we need more faith in God.. Look at vs. 5. Who overcomes? The one whose faith is in Jesus! In John's gospel he recorded Jesus saying, "In this world you will have tribulation but take heart I have overcome the world." F.F. Bruce wrote, "By their faith in Jesus as the Son of God they are so united with Him that His victory becomes theirs; they conquer by His power."

Today I want to share with you some truths about giants and about giant overcomers from the story of David and Goliath. But this introduction is absolutely critical because we must grasp the fact that not all "giants" are meant to be overcome. Only those giants that oppose us from being who God wants us to be and doing what God wants us to do. Sometimes a "giant" you face might be from God to turn you back to God. Jonah is a perfect example. He faced both a giant storm and a giant fish. But those giants were sent by God to turn Jonah back to God. Almost all of us, when we were teenagers, at some point viewed parental authority as a giant that threatened our self-autonomy and self-expression. But most often that parental authority was not a giant to overcome but a giant means by which God was protecting us. It is imperative that we discern whether the "giant" wall before us is a wall to be broken down, climbed over, OR IF IT IS A SIGN FROM GOD TO TURN AROUND!

1 Samuel 17:41-50

Goliath walked out toward David with his shield bearer ahead of him, sneering in contempt at this ruddy-faced boy. "Am I a dog," he roared at David, "that you come at me with a stick?" And he cursed David by the names of his gods. "Come over here, and I'll give your flesh to the birds and wild animals!" Goliath yelled.

David replied to the Philistine, "You come to me with sword, spear, and javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of Heaven's Armies—the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. Today the Lord will conquer you, and I will kill you and cut off your head. And then I will give the dead bodies of your men to the birds and

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wild animals, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel! And everyone assembled here will know that the Lord rescues his people, but not with sword and spear. This is the Lord's battle, and he will give you to us!"

As Goliath moved closer to attack, David quickly ran out to meet him. Reaching into his shepherd's bag and taking out a stone, he hurled it with his sling and hit the Philistine in the forehead. The stone sank in, and Goliath stumbled and fell face down on the ground.

So David triumphed over the Philistine with only a sling and a stone, for he had no sword.

The story of David and Goliath is one of the most well-known stories in the Bible. Its popular appeal is due to our God-given longing for justice. It is a story about the good guy defeating the bad guy; the oppressed, taunted, little guy overcoming his powerful, taunting oppressor; the bully getting his due at the hands of the one he bullied. Everybody loves to root for the underdog. The Philistines had been long time oppressors of the Israelites. Their two previous military campaigns against Israel had failed miserably, but once again they had come to challenge Israel and fight against them. This time they sent Goliath out to represent them against Israel's best fighter – a common practice in ancient warfare. Goliath, standing about 9 ½ ft. tall with armor that weighed about 125 lbs. taunted them daily. Israel was afraid.

The Truth About Giants

I. Giants are a Part of Life

"...don't be surprised at the fiery trials you are going through, as if something strange were happening to you. Instead, be very glad—for these trials make you partners with Christ in his suffering, so that you will have the wonderful joy of seeing his glory when it is revealed to all the world." 1 Peter 4:12-13

"Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance." James 1:2-3

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The expectation that the Lord will shield you from trials is a faulty, unrealistic expectation which inevitably will lead to discouragement. On the other hand, expecting giants will help you prepare for them and learn from them.

II. Giants Introduce us to Ourselves

Giants teach us a lot about ourselves. It is much easier to talk about our trust in God than to exercise trust in God when you are staring in the face of a giant. Giants don't destroy faith as much as they reveal faith, or a lack of faith. Both David, and his brothers professed faith in God, but Goliath's challenge revealed that only David possessed a strong faith in God. Giants reveal character. Sometimes you don't know what is in the cup until it gets bumped. The same principle holds true with people. When you get bumped, what is in you spills out and becomes evident.

III. Giant's Intentions are to Intimidate

When Goliath taunted the Israelite army we are told that they were afraid and greatly dismayed. The word dismayed conveys a sense of hopelessness. The Devil uses giants to try and intimidate us because fear will paralyze us or distract us from God's will. Fear has the ability to provoke people to all kinds of sinful behavior. Peter denied the Lord 3x because he was afraid. (Matt. 26)

The Truth About Giant-Conquerors

I. Giant Conquerors Keep God in the Picture

This narrative contains a striking contrast between the faith of David, a shepherd boy without military training, and the fear of all the Israelite soldiers, including three of David's brothers.

*When Saul and the Israelites heard this, they were terrified and deeply shaken. (vs. 11)
As soon as the Israelite army saw him, they began to run away in fright. "Have you seen the giant?" the men asked. "He comes out each day to defy Israel." (vs. 24-25a)*

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When the Israelite soldiers saw Goliath they fled from him in fear. They were in awe of his size and strength and probably his trash talk.

David, on the other hand, didn't look at him and say, "Wow". David didn't see what the other Israelites saw.

"What will a man get for killing this Philistine and ending his defiance of Israel? Who is this pagan Philistine anyway, that he is allowed to defy the armies of the living God?" (vs. 26)

His response was, "Who is this pagan Philistine?" "Who does he think he is that he can oppose God?" David was not looking at this situation as a conflict between Goliath and himself, but between Goliath and God. David views the battle as pitting a "pagan Philistine" against the "living God." In David's view, powerless false gods of the Philistines were up against the living God of Israel. The Psalms remind us repeatedly about the impotence of idols: *"They have mouths but cannot speak, and eyes but cannot see. They have ears but cannot hear, and noses but cannot smell. They have hands but cannot feel, and feet but cannot walk, and throats but cannot make a sound."* (In other words, they are dead!) *"And those who make idols are just like them, as are all who trust in them."*

Next to Goliath, David was nothing, but next to God Goliath was nothing. The question is, "Does your picture only include your giant and yourself, or is God in the picture?" The Israelites viewed David as TOO BIG. Goliath was TOO big to hit. David looked at Goliath and said, "He is SO BIG, I can't miss."

II. Giant Conquerors Rely on God

You can't face your giants relying on your own wisdom and your own strength. David did not trust in his own skill with the sling to defeat Goliath. His trust was not in himself, but in God. In verse 37, David said that the God who delivered him from the lion and bear would deliver him from Goliath. In verse 45-47 David repeats that the Lord will deliver. Then he says it would be done so everyone would know that the Lord doesn't deliver through sword and spear – the battle is the Lord's. If you feel like you don't have the

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strength to overcome your giant, that's OK, because you need to rely on the Lord's strength, not your own.

Because giant-conquerors rely on God, they are inevitably found giving glory to God! *"...and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel! And everyone assembled here will know that the Lord rescues his people, but not with sword and spear. This is the Lord's battle, and he will give you to us!"* (vs. 46,47)

Although I have been stressing our need to place our confidence in God and not ourselves, I do not intend to devalue self-confidence. David demonstrated both God-confidence and self-confidence when he said, *"Today **the Lord will conquer you**, and **I will kill you** and cut off your head."* (vs. 46) Self-confidence is of value, but it needs to be founded upon God confidence. David's self-confidence was the by-product of His confidence in God.

III. Giant Conquerors Build their Faith through Faithfulness

I think we would be missing a critical element if we thought David's trust was something he was born with; an inherent difference. His repeated reference to the fact that God delivered him from the lion and the bear demonstrates that David's faith in the present was based on God's faithfulness in the past. As David was faithful to his responsibility to protect sheep, he learned that God would be faithful to help him. David might not have had the military training that his brothers had, but he had an even more valuable training; he was trained to trust. If you will be faithful to do what God wants you to do when facing lesser giants, you will learn that you can trust him when facing the greater giants.

IV. Giant Conquerors Pull the Trigger

"As Goliath moved closer to attack, David quickly ran out to meet him." (vs. 48) Once you have sized up your "giant" and determined that this giant is standing in the way of God's will and God is leading you to face it and overcome it, you still have to act decisively and run to it rather than away

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from it. When you know God wants you to do something that makes you anxious, it is important to take action quickly. The longer you put it off, the easier it is to find some justification as to why you don't need to do it. David talked a good talk, but he also walked the talk. Run to your giants this year!

CLOSE: The message of Christianity is a message of overcoming. It is the message that God, through Christ, has already overcome the greatest giant of all; the giant wall that separated us from God and left us without hope of anything but God's judgment. This giant wall has been broken down by Jesus' death and resurrection. He has overcome Satan, sin, and death and His victory becomes our victory when we embrace him, trusting in Him as savior and Lord. His Spirit has now been given to you to live victoriously for Him.

All overcoming on our part is through Him, by Him, because of Him, and ultimately for Him.