

The Illusions of Satan and God

1 Samuel 17:41-50 ⁴¹ So the Philistine came, and began drawing near to David, and the man who bore the shield *went* before him. ⁴² And when the Philistine looked about and saw David, he disdained him; for he was *only* a youth, ruddy and good-looking. ⁴³ So the Philistine said to David, "Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?" And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. ⁴⁴ And the Philistine said to David, "Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field!" ⁴⁵ Then David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. ⁴⁶ "This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you and take your head from you. And this day I will give the carcasses of the camp of the Philistines to the birds of the air and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. ⁴⁷ "Then all this assembly shall know that the LORD does not save with sword and spear; for the battle *is* the LORD'S, and He will give you into our hands." ⁴⁸ So it was, when the Philistine arose and came and drew near to meet David, that David hastened and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine. ⁴⁹ Then David put his hand in his bag and took out a stone; and he slung *it* and struck the Philistine in his forehead, so that the stone sank into his forehead, and he fell on his face to the earth. ⁵⁰ So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, and struck the Philistine and killed him.

David and Goliath, the ultimate story of the little guy verses the giant. A reminder that the strong don't always win. The victorious underdog. At least that is the way the world see it. That is all they can see. A story of hope for the downtrodden.

But those who can see truth, can see that it is not David versus Goliath but God versus Goliath. It is not the little guy who wins because Goliath is the little guy compared to God. It was not David who won but God. The one thing we have to always remember if we are going to see this account correctly is that the battle belongs to God. It's not a story to inspire us to believe the little guy can win it's an account to teach us that the victory is ours through Christ.

Goliath has the illusion of strength.

I think it was a couple years ago that one of those riddle/puzzles showed up on Facebook, which I read over and over again and could not figure out the answer. Finally, I noticed the punctuation and the answer was so obvious that I was tempted to smack my head. Why didn't I see it earlier.

The same thing happens often in our life of faith. We have problems that seem impossible, insurmountable. But really, we aren't seeing things correctly. We are missing the obvious. We are taken in by the appearance instead of understanding the reality.

Goliath is a faint, a fake, an illusion. Goliath was never a threat to the people of Israel, but Satan did a really good job of making him look like a real problem.

The forces of the Philistines were gathered on one hill and the forces of Israel gathered on another. In between them was the valley of Elah. The Israelites on their hill could easily see as this giant of a man stood in the midst of the Philistine camp and walk down into the valley. He really looked like a serious problem.

During WWII when the allies were planning to invade France at Normandy, they did a lot of things to make it look like they were attacking somewhere else. One things they did was to make inflatable tanks. These tanks looked imposing and dangerous from a distance but were only an illusion.

Goliath was only an illusion. He was never a real threat.

Genesis 49:10 ¹⁰ The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor a lawgiver from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes; And to Him *shall be* the obedience of the people.

This passage and many others make it clear that the Philistines could not win. God had already decreed that Judah would remain until the coming of Christ. Goliath was not a real threat, the philistines were not a real threat. As David told Goliath:

1 Samuel 17:46 This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand

Goliath had set himself not just against the Lord, but against the Lord's promises. It was his goal to destroy the nation of Israel through whom the Lord had promised to bring the Messiah. When David tells us that Goliath had "defied the Lord," it's not just that Goliath was saying bad things about the name of the Lord. It was that Goliath and the Philistines were actively attempting to stop God from fulfilling His promises. For this reason, they had no chance of succeeding.

1 Samuel 17:47 the battle *is* the LORD'S,

Goliath was an illusion, but he was a very convincing illusion. He was almost ten feet tall. His armor weighed 120 lbs. The tip of his spear weighed 16 lbs. Imagine a man strong enough to throw with force a spear where just the tip weighs 16 lbs.

Goliath was a very convincing illusion. This is what Satan is good at. He is good at making balloons that look like tanks. But He can't make anything that can actually threatens us.

2 Timothy 1:12 for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day

Satan cannot stand between us and the tree of life which is waiting for us in the life which is to come. Satan cannot take from us the forgiveness of sins that is ours in Christ. Neither Goliath nor Satan can stand between us and God's promises.

What Satan can do.

He can make our lives miserable. He can call us names. He can throw us in prison. He can steal our money, our health, our friends, and our family. He can throw us in prison and perhaps even torture us. At least sometimes he can do all that when God permits it. Because he can do all these things and more

He can create a very convincing illusion of danger, of problems, of victory. If I was thrown in prison or tortured it would really look like a real problem to me.

Satan can do all that and more but he cannot separate us from the love God and from the promise of the tree of life. And because of that, whatever we see, whatever he throws at us, it is only an illusion and never a real threat.

Romans 8:39 ³⁹ **nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

This is what David understands that Goliath cannot win because he is standing between God's people and God's promises.

What Goliaths stand in your way? What problems appear in your life as obstacles too big to win against?

For such problems there are two possibilities, one they stand between us and God's promises. If so, they are only illusion. They cannot win. Nothing can stop us from receiving what God has promised. This is what Christ was speaking about when He said that faith as small as a mustard seed could move mountains. He was speaking of anything that comes between us and Christ.

The second option is that they do not stand between us and God's promises. In this case they are still only an illusion because they are a side battle, they don't really matter. They feel important. They seem important, but ultimately "this too shall pass."

Ultimately Goliath is either an illusion or sidetrack. In either case he doesn't matter.

God often gives the illusion of weakness.

If Goliath is an illusion of strength, then David is an illusion of weakness. If Satan appears strong but cannot actually win, God often appears weak but cannot actually lose.

God told Zerubbabel not to "**despise the day of small things.**" And Paul reminds us in our epistle "**not to boast in anything except the cross of Christ.**"

1 Corinthians 1:21 ²¹ **For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.**

God often uses things that seem small and weak. We should not look down on these things because

Saul believed that David needed sword and shield and armor if he was to fight Goliath. David knew the truth that the victory belonged to the Lord and the weapons of the Lord are not swords and shields.

Open your eyes to see things how they really are and not how they appear to be. The lies of Satan appear large and dangerous but have no power. The weapons of God appear small and insignificant but contain all the power that created worlds.

God's word reminds us often that appearances are not the reality. It calls us to open our eyes.

Balaam in one of the most ironical statements in scripture declares:

Numbers 24:3-4 "The utterance of Balaam the son of Beor, The utterance of the man whose eyes are opened, 4 The utterance of him who hears the words of God, Who sees the vision of the Almighty, Who falls down, with eyes wide open:

And some of us remember the prayer of Elisha for his servant.

2 Kings 6:17 17 And Elisha prayed, and said, "LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." Then the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

Open your eyes to the truth instead of the appearance.

If our eyes were opened like David's we would not be afraid to walk out and meet Goliath. We would see the power of the Lord that stands against Goliath. If our eyes were opened like David's we would be astounded at the power contained in the water of baptism.

I was there when Knox was baptized. Mark spoke some words and sprinkled some water. It appeared like nothing. But if we could see with spiritual eyes instead of physical we would have seen as Jesus says in our text, "Satan falling like lightening from heaven."

Open your eyes to see the truth behind the appearance. Open your eyes to know the strength of the Lord in weakness. Open your eyes and do not despise the day of little things.

The story of David and Goliath is not the victory of the little guy over the giant. It is a reminder that the power of God comes in weak looking vessels, that we should not despise these small things, and that nothing can stand between us and the salvation which Jesus has won for us.

When we believe Satan's illusions we lose, when we trust God's promises we win.

1Co 1:25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

1Co 15:57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.