

THE LORD CAN MAKE US STRONG

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Lesson: I Samuel 17:2-11, 17-25, 38-51

Can you do great things without being big and strong? The Word tells the story of a boy named David who did great things. His story is like a good many fairy tales, but in this case it is truth—truth stranger than fiction. The youngest son of a farmer, a simple shepherd boy, slays a giant, and as a reward is made rich and is married to a princess; then he lives as an outlaw—as a sort of Robin Hood—through many adventures, until he first gains half the kingdom, and finally the whole of it.

David was born in Bethlehem. He had seven older brothers, who did not think much of him, because he was not so tall and big as they. And so he was sent out into the hills to keep the sheep. It was dangerous to be a shepherd in those days. David had to kill a bear and a lion when he was not much more than a boy. But he liked to roam about the fields and hills, and make up verses, and sing them to his own tunes.

Now, we are told that war broke out against the Philistines. David's three oldest brothers became soldiers; for they were tall men. And one day David came to the camp with a supply of food and heard to his surprise that there was a great giant who had offered to fight alone against any Israelite, instead of their having a big battle in which all the soldiers fought. Goliath was a man over nine feet tall, and nobody dared to fight him. On the other hand, the Israelites had very few weapons and wanted to avoid giving general battle; so the king, Saul, promised: "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." The story then tells how David killed the giant, and frightened the Philistines so that they all ran away. And so Israel was free of them.

David was brave. There have been many brave soldiers, but hardly any of them are told about in the Word. The reason David is told about is that he was brave simply because he trusted utterly in the Lord. He was not used to fighting with swords or in heavy armor. But he knew that "the Lord does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's." So he simply took his sling, and five smooth stones from the brook, and going near the giant said: "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." And then he slung a stone into the giant's forehead, so that he fell down dead.

In most ancient times—especially before the flood of Noah—there were giants living on the earth. Some of them were still left in the land of Canaan when the Israelites conquered the land under Moses. David and his men destroyed the last of that giant race from the earth.

But when those giants died, they came into the spiritual world, and there became evil spirits who had such power that they could not be kept in hell, but broke out and wandered about in the world of spirits to do wicked things to good spirits and to frighten them into doing the evil things which they wanted them to do.

And just as David did away with all the giants in the land of Canaan, so the Lord, while on the earth, fought constantly against these powerful evil spirits that ruled in the world of spirits. And just as David was only a youth when he slew Goliath, so (we are told in the Writings) the Lord overcame all these evil spirits of the giants while He was yet a child on earth!

Now, although the Lord has put all the spirits of the giants into their places in hell, there are always some evil spirits who are running loose in the world of spirits, and who, by magic, make themselves look like great giants; and these evil spirits like to tempt people to do wrong, and to think wrongly.

And these spirits—whom you cannot see, but who try to lead you unawares into doing evil things—especially try to *frighten* children into serving them. They try to make out that they are very powerful, and make it seem very easy to do wrong, but very hard to be good and obedient and to do what is right. They get children into bad habits, and then they say to them: “We are too strong for you; you can’t fight us. You have to obey us.”

Now, I suppose that you will never on earth meet any giants nine feet tall. (If you should meet any, they will probably be friendly people who just happen to be tall.) But sometimes it happens that you get a lesson in school that appears as a giant of a lesson, because it seems so big and difficult. And sometimes there is a job to be done at home that seems simply a giant of a job!

Now, are you so very different from David? May it not be possible that the Lord is waiting to help you in what you have to do in your tasks, just as much as He helped David in his big tasks?

You might say that David was a special case—that he had already been picked out by the Lord to become King of Israel, and had been anointed and blessed by the prophet Samuel, and so he simply could not fail.

None of you knows as yet what great thing the Lord has picked you out for. You are not anointed, but you are baptized into the name of the Lord who has overcome the hells—baptized by a sign that lets all spirits know, when they

come to you, that if you want to, you can at any time call on the Lord to help you be strong and courageous enough to overcome the gigantic difficulties you get into.

And not only were you baptized, but you are also blessed—not just once, but again and again, as often as you go to church, or to worship, or as often as you read or hear the Word. And each of the commandments of the Lord, each of the truths you learn from the Word, is one of the five smooth stones of the brook which you can use to slay any evil thought that comes into your mind.

If we just think of how the Lord helped David, who so trusted in the Lord that he refused to be frightened by the giant of evil—it will help us to be unafraid, and to have faith that the Lord, and He alone, can make us strong.