

The eEncourager chapter two

Of Giants and Creatures

There have been many challenges to the advancement of the Gospel and the Church, which is the biblical Bride of Jesus. If Christians could somehow be led to believe that there was only one giant, or, if they could be convinced that there are other giants but there are no resources available in time and space to deal with them, an enemy of the Church and of the Gospel of Christ, say, Satan perhaps, could accomplish with such deceptions the equivalent of shoveling mud and sand into the gears of God's Grace to His precious people.

There are many interpretations of the great story of David killing the Philistine giant, Goliath. Some teachers liken David to modern day believers. Nope, he was clearly a picture of our Messiah and King. We are those helpless soldiers, who were being saved. Some liken the five stones that David chose from the brook as trials that we must remove by faith from our pouches and believe God to eliminate. Most derived illustrations are contrived and do not line up with biblical theology. But David's five stones each had a *giant* purpose.

After returning from the creek, things certainly went swimmingly for David and his brothers, but it usually did not happen that way. Usually the chosen champion of one culture stood against any and all champions of another culture, in orderly, albeit deadly, succession, until someone cried, "**Uncle!**" which meant, "*The old uncle-type geezer over there is the only one we have left, and he doesn't stand a chance.*" (Admit it, you always wondered where *crying uncle* came from!)

It does not take a lot of research to also discover that hand-to-hand combat was the norm for the ancients. Thus, thriving people groups focused their resources on the breeding and training of true champions. The most reasoning and life-valuing societies developed this idea to put forth men, who would

represent them in one-on-one, mano a mano warfare. The winner's army enslaved the people of the loser's army, but by this touch of early civility many lives were spared.

The Philistines were a ruthless, murderous lot, and they had advanced as a people because of the victories of their champions, who just happened to be **giants**. Goliath, for example, was over nine (9.5!!!) feet tall, and his brief description in I Samuel 17 inspires fear and awe even thousands of years later. In fact, he was so successful, that we do not hear about his relatives until many years after the stone from David's sling found its mark right between his surprised peepers. Why didn't we hear about them? The other giants were so afraid that they ran away! So much for giants being the key to national prosperity. Seems the "arm of flesh," operating independent of God, always fails, no matter how large it is!*

But, can you imagine?! Did you get the point? There were **four** of them, four **more** after Goliath, also **all** giants (2 Samuel 21:22)!

*"Wait, didn't David grab **five** stones from the stream? Goliath, plus four, equals five giants! Could it be?! No way, Hosea! Did young David take the field that day, actually prepared, as the representative of Israel, to knock out the whole team of the giants from Gath, one by one, one after the other, until there were no more Philistine champions to fell? Are you kidding me?! I thought David was a great Messiah-figure for slaying Goliath! But he obviously went out there to do much more than kill one little giant!"*

Could it be that Jesus did a whole lot more than simply conquer our sins?!

One of the best things about a big family is the fun of everyone expressing themselves. From Grandma's threat to declare her epitaph, "I told yawl I was sick!" to the mispronounced *glimps* of the little ones, part of the joy is the unexpected. Good writers and entertainers have always said that 50% of great comedy is the element of surprise, which has never been lacking in our house.

Once again, I cannot identify the *guilty party*, but years ago we moved to the southwest quadrant, “The Southern Crescent” of Atlanta, and we eventually decided on a new church. The wonderful pastor wanted to come over to meet everyone personally and begin our prep for membership.

That night everyone pitched in, and spruced up after supper, but the waiting was very stressful for our little guys. Stress can have an amazing effect on the things that kids will say.

The preacher was coming! The ***preacher*** was coming! And when the preacher arrived, what came out – in the hearing of the new preacher – was a very nervous, “The ***CREATURE*** is here!”

Being the son of a preacher-man, and married to the daughter of a preacher-man, and having been teased and called a preacher-man myself, I want nothing more than mercy for all preacher-men everywhere! But the reality is that the flesh and the world and the devil have been hard at work for centuries, burning their candles from both ends, and many a well-intended preacher-man, rabbi, and priest has succumbed to what some call ***scripture-twisting***. In most cases, they have not done it maliciously. They have meant well, but have fallen ***far short***.

One of the most difficult things to reconcile and accept, as we embrace the true grace of God, is that someone has taught us some really awful stuff, unbiblical stuff that has messed us up something terrible – “Just ***turble***,” as one commentator says.

Steve McVey deals with the issue boldly. At the beginning of his teaching, he states that he will leave the location immediately unless everyone agrees on something crucial. ***If shown some plain truth from God’s Word that goes against what we have previously been taught and believed, will we accept and believe God’s Word? If not, Steve leaves!***

When Oliver North becomes convinced that God wants him to help a Christian college raise funds, he writes a check for the first \$1,000, holds it in the air, and begins counting hands in the audience until he reaches the goal. ***Extreme needs and extreme problems demand extreme choices and extreme actions.***

The Grace of Jesus Christ has been mixed with Law, with flesh, with rules, with religion, and no matter how hard we shake the mixtures, oil and water always separate. We have been told repeatedly that they are the best of friends, that God intends for us to use them together, that this is what is expected of all good Christians, but it does not work. It has never worked.

Accelerated by our national and international economic woes, man's best efforts are crashing and burning while man's anger is more and more misdirected at God, as though He were to blame! Suicide is rising, depression is out of control, and those who rule our information, influence, and truth-sources continue to soft-sell the consequences and devastating results. A Christian brother told me today, ***"My adult children have gone far out in the world, deep into the world, and they are trying everything, except turning and calling on the Lord."***

Many have been failed so badly by religion that they respond violently to any kind deed or word. ***"If you are going to talk Church to me, talk to the hand!"***

Those of us who love the Lord, His Word, and the lost and angry are grieving and praying for answers. Many of us have failed to measure up. Many of us have believed lies that bind. Many of us have become scary ***creatures*** instead of effective preachers.

So, how does one ***transform*** into a giant-killer, into a fervent and effective prayer-warrior? Let's return to the beginning of the chapter and ask, "Of whom was David a picture and type and symbol? Are we David today?" NO, but this is essentially what most of us have been taught and what we have acted out.

Jesus is the true giant-killer, and we are in Him by faith. We are to live in His New Covenant which involves something they only dreamed about in the Old Testament. ***We are not only in Him, but He is in us.***

The best summary I know is that "Jesus gave His Life for us, to give His Life to us, to live His Life through us" (Maj. W. Ian Thomas).

Let's look at that again!

"Jesus ***gave*** His Life ***for*** us,

to ***give*** His Life ***to*** us,

to ***live*** His Life ***through*** us."

Now, we are all very familiar with Christ's atoning work. We hear about it every Sunday. He gave His Life for the forgiveness of our sins! Hallelujah! Praise His Name – BUT DON'T STOP THERE!

And, praise the Lord, many ***don't*** stop there! But they do immediately teach that Jesus is Lord of our lives! Christ is Lord! He is Lord of all! BUT DO WE KNOW WHAT LORDSHIP MEANS?

We are often so busy working at being His ambassadors, and working at being good stewards, and working to develop ourselves into His grand workmanship that we forget our relationship with Him, and all that it means.

In fact, have you ever heard this simple truth that **Jesus is your Lord means that Jesus is your Life**? Or did some ***creature*** lead you to believe that God has lots of employees in His great Do-It-Yourself Warehouse? If it wasn't true, it would be very funny!

Some years back, some well-meaning Christian ***creatures*** welcomed Brother Yun, tortured and subsequently escaped house-church pastor from China, to a visit of the United States. After his tour, someone made the error of asking what he thought of all he had seen. As he was boarding his plane back to his family, he did not miss a beat as he replied, "It is amazing all you American Christians have accomplished ***without God.***"

The chilling truth, as Paul exhorted Timothy, is that it is entirely possible to somehow ***miss*** the Grace of God!

We are either with Jesus our giant-slayer, or we are without Him. We live by faith in dependence on His Life – ***LORD EQUALS LIFE*** – or we live independent of His Life. We walk by the Spirit of Christ or we walk by the flesh.

And, in either case, if we should ever ask a persecuted brother, who experienced fasting for 74 days, we should be prepared for the unvarnished truth.

*There is much to be said for the strength of man and all those virtues and abilities, that *seem* to derive from man, but which actually originate in and are sustained by the Lord. One night I was working late in downtown, and a terrible thunder storm descended. My moon-roof suddenly became a storm-drain, and the closer-button failed! I wheeled into a service station, jerked to a stop under a broad overhang, and got out, soaking wet. A moment later I heard a man laughing, and turned to see World Champion Kevin Nash, formerly of my beloved Tennessee Volunteers, approaching me. I was more frustrated than flattered at his broad smile, and explained that the roof would not close. He instructed me to sit back down in the driver seat, turn the key on, and push the close button, which I did - without any hesitation. He angled his muscle-covered seven-foot frame across the windshield of my little Celica, grabbed the edge of the moon-roof with his giant hands, and pulled. It closed, mostly by the force of his will. I thanked him profusely and asked him for an autograph "for my daughters," which I keep in my *Amplified* Bible.