

Overcoming Giants At Hebron, Part I

Intro: I don't know if you pay attention to sports, but if you do, you have surely noticed how basketball and football teams have been acquiring some really big men. Many of these new players are really big, soaring to nearly seven feet tall. For example: NBA star LeBron James is 6' 9" tall. They are not only big, they are strong. Big Ben Roethlisberger of the NFL is 6' 5" and weighs in at 250 lbs. If you watch him play, he is really hard to bring down. Well, as you may know, there were some really big men in Bible times.

I. Background

One of the biggest men in Old Testament times was named Og (O G). We read about Og in Deuteronomy chapter 3. Og was the king of Bashan, a kingdom in Trans-Jordan that laid to the east of the Sea of Galilee. Og was the last of the race of giants called the Rephaim. According to verse 11 of Deut. 3, Og's bed was 13 ½ feet long, and 6 feet wide. This was the worlds' first King-size bed. His bed was on display in the museum at Rabbah.

Another giant you might be more familiar with was the Philistine's champion Goliath. According to the Scripture he was over 9 feet tall. That my friends is a big man. Did you know that there was a whole tribe of giants in the Old Testament who terrified the people of Israel? They are called the Anakim, or the sons of Anak because they were descendants of Anak. This tribe of giants struck fear in the hearts of the people of Israel. Turn with me in your Bibles to Numbers chapter 13.

We learn in Numbers 13, verse 1 that while Israel was camped at Kadesh-Barnea, the LORD commanded Moses to send out spies to spy out the land of Canaan, which He was going to give to the sons of Israel. Moses selected one man from each of the 12 tribes and sent them out. Well, the spies went out and during their surveillance of the land they came to **Hebron** where they saw giants, the descendants of Anak (v. 22). When the spies returned from spying out the land, 10 of the spies gave a bad report to the people. Look at verse 28, They told the people that "the people who live in the land are strong, the cities are fortified and very large; and moreover, we saw the sons of Anak, descendants of the giants." Caleb tried to calm the peoples' fears but to no avail. The ten rebellious spies filled the peoples' hearts with fear. They discouraged the people in verses 31-33 saying, "We are not able to go up against the people of the land of Canaan because they are too strong for us. v. 32—"We will be devoured if we go up into this land, all the people

whom we saw are men of great size.” v. 33—“The land is filled with giants, we saw the Nephilim, the sons of Anak.” They exaggerated their account by suggesting that they were like little grasshoppers compared to the giants who filled the land. **According to verse 22** there where only **three giants**, the sons of Anak, Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmi. **So, the land wasn’t full of giants (v. 33).**

What is of particular importance to our study this morning is the place where the giants lived. We learn from this account in Numbers 33, verse 22 that the 12 spies came up into the land from the south through the Negev in southern Canaan, and they came to **Hebron** where Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmi, the sons of Anak were.

As you can see from the map, **Hebron** is located in the hill country of the southern part of the land of Canaan. It lies about 20 miles south of Jerusalem, and to the west of the Dead Sea. The city of **Hebron** was situated on two ridges running north to south. It sits approximately 2,800 feet above sea level, and is famous for its very rich soil. In fact, the valley of Eshcol, from which the spies collected the bountiful grapes, pomegranates, and figs, laid just north of the city. You can see it here on the map. **Hebron** remains a very fruitful region to this day. If you ever have an opportunity to visit Hebron you will find fruit-stands with grapes, pomegranates, figs, apples, and nuts that remain the prize produce of the Eshcol Valley.

As you may have already surmised from the introduction, **Hebron** was not only famous for growing great fruit, they also were renowned for **growing big men**. As we shall see, Hebron is mentioned several times in the Old Testament as the city of the giants. Sadly, the sons of Israel permitted their fear of these giants to keep them from entering the Promised land of Canaan.

What giants are keeping you from realizing God’s plan, promises, and provision for your Christian life? The Lord Jesus has left us a job to do, to reach the lost with the good news that God loves them, and has made provision for them to be forgiven of their sin through faith in His eternal Son, Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, we have let the giants, of doubt, grief, uselessness, and delay, hinder us from doing the work God has assigned for us to do.

I want to look at the lives of four Old Testament saints who faced giants at Hebron. Each of these individuals faced a giant at Hebron, and because they looked to God for help, they came away victorious. Some faced the literal physical sons of Anak, while others faced figurative giants. Giants we would call obstacles and trials, such as, doubt, fear, depression, sickness, death, delay, financial calamities, loss of jobs,

and a host of other calamities that come into all of our lives. I want to look at how these four Old Testament saints faced and overcame their giants, so we might be able to learn how to face and gain the victory over the giants that come against us.

The first Old Testament saint I want to look at is Abraham, who overcame the giant of doubt by placing his faith in the promise of God.

I. Abraham Defeats The Giant Of Doubt (Genesis 13–14)

The first mention of Hebron is recorded in Genesis 13:18. Again, many of you are familiar with the story. Abraham and Lot had been very prosperous, so much so that we read in **Genesis chapter 13, verse 6** “And the land could not sustain them while dwelling together, for their possessions were so great that they were not able to remain together.” Things got so bad that Abraham and Lot’s herdsman started fighting over grazing land. Abraham being the spiritual man that he was proposed separating. He told Lot to choose whatever portion of land he desired, and he, Abraham, would take what was left.

We read in **verse 10** that Lot lifted up his eyes and saw all of the well-watered Jordan valley—it was like the garden of the LORD (Eden), like the land of Egypt as you go to Zoar.” **Don’t miss the reference to Sodom and Gomorrah in verse 10.** Yes, you guessed it. **v. 11**—“So Lot chose all the fertile Jordan Valley; and Lot journeyed eastward.” **v. 12**—“And Abraham settled in the land of Canaan.” And, according to verse 18—“Abraham moved his tent and came and dwelt by the Oaks of Mamre, which are in **Hebron**, and there he built an altar to the LORD.” This provides the background to the Giant Abraham is going to face at Hebron: **The giant of doubt.**

Lot moved his family and herds down to the lushes Jordan River valley. The problem of course is that this area bordered on the towns of Sodom and Gomorrah, located at the southern end of the Dead Sea. As the names imply, these were horribly wicked cities. It wasn’t long before Lot moved into Sodom, sacrificing both his and his families morals.

We pick up our story in Genesis **chapter 18**, as Abraham faces the giant of doubt. You will be familiar with this story. Abe and Sarah were well advanced in years. According to Genesis 17, verse 17, Abraham was 100 and Sarah was 90. In chapter 18 three men show up at Abraham’s tent, and according to the context, two of them were angels and one of them was the pre-incarnate, LORD Jesus Christ.

In verse 10 of chapter 18, the LORD tells Abraham that He will return to him at this time next year, and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son.” Now Sarah was listening at the tent door, and when she heard this prediction that she was going to have a baby, she laughed to herself, “After all these years, will I an old woman, way past childbearing, shall I indeed bear a child when I am so old?” The LORD, knowing that Sarah laughed at His prediction, asked Abraham in verse 13, “Why did Sarah laugh, and doubt My word that she shall have a son?” Abraham confronted his wife, but Sarah denied it of course because she was afraid. And He, the LORD said, “No, but you did laugh.”

Abraham had likewise laughed earlier when the LORD promised him that Sarah would bear him a son in her old age (Genesis 17:17). This is a pretty incredible prediction. We are told over and over again that both Abraham (100) and Sarah (90) years of age, were way past childbearing age. The LORD assures Abraham, and by way of extension Sarah, in chapter 18, verse 14, that there is not anything too difficult for the LORD. And “That at the appointed time next year” He says, “I will return and Sarah shall have a son.”

Can you imagine the emotions this couple was feeling? It had been 24 years since God had first promised Abraham that he would be the father of a multitude (Genesis 12 and 15). **The giant of doubt seized both Abraham and Sarah’s hearts.** They both laughed at God’s promise because they doubted that it was possible because of their age. However, our loving God graciously assured Abraham and Sarah that He would provide Sarah with the son of promise.

This raises an interesting question. Why did God make Abraham and Sarah wait sooo long before He fulfilled His word to them? You know that Sarah grieved all of her life because she couldn’t bear Abraham a son. And how about the mess they made with Hagar and Ishmael when they tried to help God out (Genesis 16). Why does God allow such difficulties to come into the life of believers? As we have learned from the Book of Job, God allows suffering because it builds endurance and faith in the life of His kids. Suffering makes us more like God’s own Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. It is designed to shape and mold us into the image of Christ.

While Abraham and Sarah both may have laughed when God shared His plan to give Sarah the ability to bear the son of promise in her old age, the Scriptures makes it clear that they both grew strong in faith in respect to God’s promise being fully assured that what He had promised, He was able

to perform. Therefore also it was reckoned to him as righteousness (Romans 4:20-22) The same thing is said of Sarah in Hebrew 11:10-12.

The second incident in this story concerns Abraham's nephew Lot. Lot had moved down near Sodom and Gomorrah, and eventually he moved in to Sodom. The LORD reveals to Abraham that He has come down to deal with the wickedness in Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham, concerned for Lot's welfare, negotiates with God to spare Lot from the coming destruction. Abe asks God if He would spare the city if He found 50, 45, 30, 20, or 10 righteous in the city. God promised to spare them if there were 10 righteous. Abraham fought back his doubt that even 10 righteous could be found in Sodom. He resolved to trust God to do what was right and good concerning Lot and his family. Well, the two angels went down to Sodom and delivered Lot and his family prior to God's reigning down fire from heaven. Lot's wife, who really wasn't keen on leaving looked back and was turned to a pillar of salt. Lot and his two daughter escaped to safety. God in His grace judged the awful sin in Sodom and Gomorrah, but spared Lot and his two daughters.

Application: How do we overcome the giants of doubt and discouragement in our own daily lives? We must trust God and the promises He has given to us, and we grow in our faith like Abraham and Sarah. **Paul tells us in Romans 4, verses 23-25** that Abraham and Sarah's experience was also for our sakes, because we, like them, "will be reckoned as righteous because we too have believed in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead." Abraham faced the giant of doubt at Hebron and he conquered it by faith. We need to follow Abraham's example and stop letting the giant of doubt rob us of the blessing that is ours as we put our full confidence in God and learn to trust in His loving and sovereign purposes. Do what Abraham and Sarah did and choose to believe that God is more than able to work all things together for good in the lives of those who trust and obey Him (Rom. 8:28). Abraham faced the giant of doubt at Hebron and he conquered it by faith. We can do the same.

The next biblical character that overcame a giant at Hebron was Abraham's grandson Jacob. Jacob faced the giant of grief.

II. Jacob Defeats The Giant Of Grief (Genesis 37 and 45)

This is another familiar story. It concerns Jacob's loss of his beloved son Joseph. Our story is set once again in **Hebron**. We read in Genesis 37, verse 1, "Now Jacob lived in the land where his father Isaac had sojourned, in the

land of Canaan. According to Genesis 35, verse 27, when Jacob returned from sojourning 20 years with his Uncle Laban in Haran, he came to his father Isaac at Mamre of Kariath-Arba, that is **Hebron**. Once again we are back in Hebron. When Jacob loses Joseph, he is overcome by the giant of grief. He refuses to be comforted by his living children, and vows to go down to his grave in grief (Genesis 37, verse 35). **The story is recorded in Genesis 37.**

According to v. 3, Jacob loved Joseph more than all his son. When Joseph's 10 older brothers saw that Jacob loved Joseph more than all his brothers they hated him and could not even speak to him on friendly terms (v. 4). In v. 13 Israel, that is Jacob, send his younger son Joseph to go and check on the welfare of his brothers. So, Joseph went after his brother and found them at Dothan (v. 17). When his brothers saw him coming they devised a plan to put him to death. But Reuben was able to talk his brothers into sparing Joseph's life, hoping to restore the boy to his father. Later, Judah, seeing a caravan of Ishmaelite traders on their way down to Egypt, talked his brothers into selling Joseph. They sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. The brothers took Joseph's multicolored tunic and slaughtered a male goat and dipped the tunic in the blood. They returned home to Hebron, and presented Joseph's blood-stained tunic to their father Jacob. After examining Joseph's tunic, Jacob concluded that his beloved son Joseph had been torn to pieces by a wild beast. We read in verse 34—"So Jacob tore his clothes, and put sack-cloth on his loins, and mourned for his son many days. 35 Then all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. And he said, "Surely I will go down to Sheol in mourning for my son." So his father wept for him."

Grief can be a giant that crushes your life, if you choose to give in to it. But as some of us know all too well, the loss of a loved one is devastating and rightly so. Now, let me just say, that grief is a healthy emotion that God has given us. When you lose someone you love you never really get over it, you just learn to accept it. Death is the inevitable consequence for sin. We are all going to die, but death brings grief. We experience genuine sorrow over the loss of our loved one. As believers, we have God's Spirit to help us work through our grief, so we can continue on with our lives and live them for the glory of God, and the good of others.

As you well know, Jacob is finally reunited with his beloved son Joseph, who assures first his brothers, and later his father, that God had sent Joseph to Egypt before them in order to preserve their lives (Gen. 45:5-8). After

revealing himself to his shocked and terrified brothers, Joseph sent his brothers home to bring his father and all their relatives down to Egypt. We read in verse 26 of chapter 45, that when Jacob's sons told him that Joseph was still alive, and indeed had become the ruler over all the land of Egypt, he was stunned and did not believe them. v. 27 However, "when they told him all the words that Joseph had spoken to them, and when he saw all the presents that Joseph had sent to him, then the spirit of their father Jacob was revived." v. 28— Then Israel/Jacob said, "It is enough; my son Joseph is still alive. I will go and see him before I die."

Jacob refused to be comforted and chose instead to grieve for many years. Just think of the years he wasted in sulking silence. This was a shameful display of selfish emotions. As the head of his family, Jacob needed to seek God for the comfort and strength to carry on for his glory and his families good. We conquer the giant of grief when we seek God to help us through the grieving process. We accept by faith that God loves us and is with us. We pick up the pieces of our shattered life and go on living for the glory of God. Looking forward with eager anticipation to the day when we will be united with all of our believing loved ones. This is the life of faith, a faith which is the gift of a loving, and benevolent God. If you have never experienced the love of God, we would invite you to turn your life over to Christ this morning. He will deliver you from the penalty of sin and provide you with eternal life. What is more He will be your Rock in times of doubt and grief. If you want to begin experiencing the joyful Christian life, surrender to Christ as I close in prayer.

Closing prayer

Well, I had two more Old Testament heroes who faced and conquered giants at Hebron. How about if we divide this message into two parts, and look at Caleb and David next week. If you want to discover what giants they defeated at Hebron you will have to come back next Sunday morning.

Closing Song: He's Always Been Faithful To Me!

III. Caleb Defeats The Giant Of Uselessness (Joshua 14)

IV. David Defeats The Giant Of Delay (2 Samuel)

When David became king of Judah this was his royal residence, and he resided here for seven and a half years (2 Sam. 5:5); after which time he was anointed as king over all Israel (2 Sam. 2:1-4, 11; 1 Kings 2:11).