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## OUR SUFFICIENCY IS OF GOD.

– 1 SAMUEL 17:38-49. – AUGUST 9. –

**Golden Text:** – "If God be for us who can be against us?"

– Rom. 8:31.

THE Philistines occupied a considerable portion of the seacoast fronting the land of Canaan at the time the Israelites took possession, and their rights seem to have been respected by the Israelites, for even when the land was divided by lot, before it was subdued, the portion occupied by the Philistines was not included in that recognized as given by God to the Israelites. Indeed we remember that the Lord used this powerful nation as his rod in chastening the chosen people when the unfaithfulness of the latter required it on more than one occasion. Thus in the time of Samson the Philistines were the masters of Israel, Samson being used of the Lord as one of his agents in the removal of their yoke – although the work begun by Samson was not completed until the days of Samuel, the prophet. – 1 Sam. 14.

Our lesson shows us another invasion of Israel's borders by the Philistines, Saul at this time being king, though David had already been privately anointed but not publicly proclaimed as his successor. The Philistine hosts had advanced a considerable distance into the territory of the Israelites, and had reached the more mountainous country, where Saul gathered the army of Israel to meet them. A valley lay between the two hosts, and in the center of this valley there was a ditch about ten feet deep, cut through the rock by a mountain stream. The place was favorable for a battle of the kind usually fought at that day. Neither army seemed to be anxious to attempt to cross the steep banks of the brook in the face of its opponent, for under such conditions the attacking party would be considerably [R3230 : page 328] disadvantaged. Besides, the Philistines – knowing that Israel's king stood head and shoulders above his fellow-Israelites – had pitted against him a giant Philistine, Goliath, still taller, about ten feet high

and probably stout in proportion, as indicated by the weight of his armor, spear and sword. The challenge set forth that the disputes between the two nations, of many years' standing, should be settled, not by a general battle, but by a duel between the Philistine giant and the most competent Israelite who could be found to come against him – who undoubtedly would have been Saul, the king.

For forty days this challenge was made every morning, and the king of Israel and his chief mighty men practically confessed that they feared the giant and would not respond to his challenge. It was at this juncture that David, a young man of about twenty-one, was sent by his father to his brethren in the army of Israel to see how they fared, to take them some delicacies from home, and to bring back word respecting the prosperity of the Lord's hosts. The infidel is prone to twit the Lord's people upon the statement of Scripture that David was a man after God's own heart – referring to some of his weaknesses and shortcomings; but in this lesson we see clearly the feature of David's character which God so highly esteemed, and which he has always esteemed in everyone to the extent that he possesses and manifests it. This quality which God esteemed in David was his faith – the same quality that he esteemed in Abraham and in all the faithful of the past. Of all who had "this testimony that they pleased God," it is written that by faith they did thus and so, "and it was counted unto them for righteousness." – Gal. 3:6.

David's faith in the Lord being great, he was surprised to learn when he came to the army that the Philistine had been boasting himself for forty days against Israel and Israel's God, and that no one of his nation had possessed sufficient faith in God to accept the challenge. He at once proposed that he would accept it himself and asked to be taken to the king that he might be thus commissioned. Those who mentioned him to the king spoke of him as a "mighty, valiant man," yet when Saul looked upon him he perceived that he was but a youth and was physically no match for the giant. However, he was the only champion who had arisen, and he was full of

confidence in his own success as an instrument in the Lord's hands for delivering Israel from the boastful heathen. Saul finally consented, and proposed to loan Israel's champion his own armor; but, unused to such accoutrements, David found when he had donned them that he could not feel properly at home in them. It would require considerable time to learn how to use such armor and implements advantageously and without discomfort, and he decided to go in his usual garb as a shepherd, armed only with his shepherd's club and sling and the scrip or leather bag in which to carry the stones which he selected from the bed of the brook as he passed.

Goliath could scarcely believe his own eyes when he saw that the ruddy youth who approached him had come out to do him battle with a club, for he probably did not notice the sling. He felt indignant and inquired whether he – the great, the mighty, the strong, the well-armed – was regarded as a dog to be attacked by a club; and, cursing David by his gods, he declared that he would make short work of him, and that the fowls should have his flesh.

David's retort shows clearly that he appreciated the situation in all its bearings. He was aware that his opponent was armed with sword and spear and javelin, but, as he states the matter, he was approaching the conflict strong in the strength that God supplies – strong in his faith in the Lord as the decider of battles, as the one who would be able to give him the victory and deliver his people from all their enemies. David noted, and counted well upon the fact, that the issue was not between the two armies, not between two men, but between the God of Israel and the false gods of the Philistines. Faith in God had doubtless been increasing amongst all the Israelites within the twenty years preceding this event. They were gradually coming to learn that, having been punished for their sins and idolatries and having returned unto the Lord, his favor was now with them because of his people, but David seems to have had confidence in God in more than an ordinary degree. Doubtless his own anointing to be Saul's successor in the kingdom gave him assurance that it was God's will

that the kingdom of Israel was to be continued, and that God's favor was to be with them still as a nation, notwithstanding the transgressions of the divine commandment by Saul, noted in a previous lesson.

The Jews have a tradition that it was while Goliath threw back his head in laughter at his stripling opponent that David's sling-stone struck him in the temple. The helmets of that time were not nearly so complete as those used extensively in the middle ages, and apparently the neck and a portion of the head were generally exposed, so that David's stone might have struck the vital spot of the forehead even though Goliath's head had not been thrown back in laughter. Neither was David's marksmanship so extraordinary as to be considered wholly miraculous. We have the Scriptural record that many in the tribe of David could throw such sling-stones to a hair's breadth. (Judges 20:16.) Xenophon mentions the expertness of certain **[R3230 : page 329]** Persian slingers, and Livy speaks of slingers so expert that they could send a stone from a distance through an ordinary wreath or chaplet, and could not only strike their enemies in the face, but in whatever part of the face they chose.

We cannot call this little incident a type, but we may properly see in it a figure and a lesson respecting spiritual things applicable to all who belong to the anti-typical David – Beloved – the Christ. Goliath fitly pictures the great Adversary, Satan, and all who are on his side of any controversy, seeking to bring the Lord's consecrated people into bondage either to errors or sins. Satan, as the prince of this world, found no one either willing or able to dispute his supremacy of power until our Lord Jesus, the antitypical David (Beloved), became the champion of God and the truth and such as love righteousness. As David risked his life for the deliverance of his people Israel, so our Lord Jesus not only risked, but sacrificed, his life for the deliverance of antitypical Israel; as David, after being anointed, encountered the lion, so Jesus, after he had been anointed by the holy Spirit at Jordan, was led of the Spirit into the wilderness

and endured a great fight with the Adversary. He conquered him with the Word of God, answering each of Satan's propositions for his overthrow with the words, "It is written." The Apostle explains, – For this purpose Christ was manifested, that he might destroy the bondage of death and "him that hath the power of death, that is the devil" – eventually delivering all the people of God. – Heb. 2:14.

David's conquest in some respects illustrates battles which all of the Lord's people must engage in. Goliath and the hosts supporting him may well illustrate to our minds various foes of God and truth and righteousness which challenge us and all of the Lord's people.

(1) The hosts of doubt and scepticism are today led about by the great giant of unbelief, whose size, armor, sword and spear are over all the hosts of nominal Christendom – all except the David class – the body of Christ. This giant is the evolution theory, and his armor-bearer is higher criticism. The records and promises of Israel's God are disdained, and the David class who stand forth in their defense are treated with contempt and their pebbles from the brook of truth disregarded. But science, falsely so called, though it boasts itself today and creates so great an impression that few would think of opposing it, will, nevertheless, meet its Waterloo. It shall fall before the Lord's anointed – David, "Beloved" – and its own sword of truth shall eventually complete its destruction in the morning of the new dispensation: at the same time all the hosts of error shall flee, and many of the people of God, aside from the elect body of Christ, shall be blessed by these deliverances. **[R3231 : page 329]**

(2) Goliath may properly represent pride, backed by a host of worldliness. One of the severe ordeals of the New Creature is the conquering of the love of the spirit of worldliness under the leadership of pride. Worldly pride challenges faith in God and obedience to him, and only those who are of good courage and full of confidence in the Lord can overcome this giant. It is necessary, too, that the victory should be made complete – that pride should be thoroughly

humiliated, killed, so that it can never rise up again to destroy us. It is an individual battle, and the only proper armament against this giant is a stone from the brook, the message of the Lord, showing us what is pleasing and acceptable in his sight, and assuring us that he that humbleth himself shall be exalted and he that exalteth himself shall be abased. As the poet has expressed it: –

"Where boasting ends, true dignity begins."

(3) Another giant which will sometimes challenge the people of God is fear, distrust. Mighty, imposing and terrifying indeed is the influence of fear, except upon those who have learned to know the Lord through previous experiences, and to trust him even where they cannot trace him. The giant of fear and despair must be met with the pebble from the brook, "It is written." The sling of faith must propel the word of promise with such force as to slay the adversary and to deliver us from his domination.

(4) Another giant which assaults the Lord's people, but which in the present time can be overcome only by the David class, the body of Christ, is the giant of sectarian influence. How strong, how majestic, how well-armed, how influential is this great giant, whose powers are exercised in a large measure in intimidating the Lord's true children, so that all their lifetime they are subject to bondage and fail to attain the liberty with which Christ makes free indeed! To meet this giant and to resist him successfully and to gain the victory over him, thoroughly armed as he is with the haughty voice, and large and strongly organized and equipped with worldly power and influences and boycotting opportunities, requires great grace, such grace as is to be found only in the little flock, the overcomers, the body of Christ – the David class, the "Beloved." Thus armed only with the Word of God, and trusting in his rod and staff, we may well be courageous and answer imposing sectarianism as David answered the Philistine, "Thou comest to me with a sword and with a spear and a javelin: but

I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, which thou hast defied."

Let us all remember the meekness and humility of [R3231 : page 330] David, note that his conduct was utterly devoid of boastfulness, and that we are to copy this. Like him our confidence is to be in the Lord, and not in ourselves.

By whom was David taught to aim the dreadful blow,  
When he Goliath fought, and laid the Gittite low?  
No sword or spear the stripling took,  
But chose a pebble from the brook.  
'Twas Israel's God and King who sent him to the fight,  
Who gave him strength to sling, and skill to aim aright.  
Ye feeble saints, your strength endures  
Because young David's God is yours.

– *Cowper.*

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