

[R4215 : page 232]

## VICTORY NOT TO THE STRONG

**- I SAMUEL 17:38-49 - AUGUST 9. -**

**Golden Text: – "In the Lord put I my trust." – Psalm 11:1.**

NOT long after David's anointing he became the hero of a most remarkable battle. The Philistines, residing on the seashore of Palestine, were the enemies of the Israelites from earliest times, and, as we have already seen, they held mastery over them at the time of Saul's coronation. Subsequently the victory gained over them by Saul was not complete, and they still occupied the city of Gath and considerable territory in the land given to Israel. In Gath dwelt Goliath, a descendant of the giants or Anakim, whose sight terrified the spies of Israel when they first essayed to enter the promised land. Goliath was a Philistine therefore, not by birth but by naturalization, as people of various nationalities become Americans. Goliath was in the prime of his manhood, proud of his size and strength. The Philistines, too, were vigilant and thought that with this champion and leader they might gain another victory over the Israelites. As a result they organized an army and marched northwesterly toward Jerusalem. King Saul, apprised of the fact, recruited an army to oppose them. The two armies faced each other on opposite slopes of the valley Elah. Evidently the opposing forces were fairly well matched and neither cared to make the attack. The Philistines, resorting to a method already known in history, proposed that a war be averted and that the issues between the two armies be decided by a personal battle. They sent forth Goliath as their champion and dared the Israelites to meet him. Similarly the Romans and the Albans, B.C. 667, settled the war by having three Roman Horatii and three Alban Curatii engage in mortal combat. The victory came to the Romans, inasmuch as [R4216 : page 232] one of their number survived. Similarly later, Sir Henry d'Bonham

fought with Robert Bruce between the two contending armies in Scotland.

Goliath was a giant indeed. His six cubits and a span, if estimated on the 16-inch cubit, would represent 8 ft. 8 in., or counted by the 18-inch cubit would represent 9 ft. 9 in. A cubit is the length of the human arm from the elbow to the tip of the little finger; a span is half a cubit. Encyclopedia Britannica refers to several giants: one a Scotchman, whose height was 8 ft. 3 in.; another an Arabian of 9 ft.; Charles Birne, an Irishman, measured 8 ft. 4 in.; Patrick Cotter, 8 ft. 7¾ in.; a Russian giant, 9 ft. 8 in. There is nothing, therefore, impossible or improbable in the story of Goliath. The giant was elaborately armored and practically invulnerable.

### **ISRAEL AND ISRAEL'S GOD DEFIED**

At that time each nation apparently stood for a religious system and their prosperity and influence were largely credited to the favor of their god or gods. For forty days Goliath, clothed in his resplendent, gleaming armor, with a loud voice had shouted defiance to the men of Israel and incidentally to the God they worshiped, thus endeavoring to shame them and drive them to an unequal contest, of which he felt sure he would be the victor. We cannot wonder that no Israelite was found foolhardy enough to undertake a battle with the giant on the terms and conditions then prevalent – a battle with sword and spear and javelin; ordinarily anyone would have been but a child at the mercy of the foe.

Jesse at Bethlehem was only about twenty miles distant from the camp of the army, and on the fortieth day he sent David with greetings and delicacies for three of his elder sons who were in Saul's army and to bring back word of the progress of events. The ruddy youth, the shepherd boy David, with little knowledge of warfare, was surprised to see the challenger and that the God

of Israel was thus defied by the heathen. By nature and by experience in the keeping of his sheep and the defending of them from wild animals David was courageous, fearless. Besides, he evidently was well born as respects reverence for God and faith in him. It was Goliath's defiance of the God of Israel that seemed to strike him most forcibly. He made inquiries as to why none of the Israelites in the name of the Lord had undertaken the battle, implying his own willingness to do so. Many of those with whom he communed on the subject were evidently impressed with his faith and ardor. But his own brethren were less appreciative, and sneered. However, the matter spread from mouth to mouth until it reached the ear of King Saul, who sent for David.

Although the king for some years had been out of favor with the Lord, he nevertheless had good reason for believing in divine power, as it had already been manifested in his own experiences. He evidently queried if this proposition of David, his only hope, might not be of the Lord. David explained briefly his own prowess in connection with the slaying of a lion and at another time a bear in defence of his flocks. The king admired the youth, his courage and his faith, and consented that he should undertake the battle with the giant, hoping doubtless that God would favor his people with a victory even against such odds of physical strength. King Saul had the best armor, of course, amongst all the Israelites, and he proposed that David use it. But when the latter tried it on he felt himself constrained and declared that he would have less confidence in it than out of it. He went forth to meet Goliath in his own way, armed merely with a shepherd's oak stick and with a sling and a shepherd's bag. Selecting five smooth stones for use in his sling he approached the giant as the latter came forth as usual to dare the Israelites.

The story of the conflict is quickly told. The Philistine was indignant that he should be asked to fight with a boy unarmored, and he cursed David in the name of his gods, saying, "Come to

me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air and unto the beasts of the field." David's reply was characteristic – full of that faith in God which marks his entire history from first to last, and on account of which the Lord speaks of him as a man after his own heart. He said to Goliath, "Thou comest to me with sword and spear and with javelin; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee and take thy head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the hosts of the Philistines this day to the fowls of the air and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord's and he will give you into our hands." Thus the issue was seen by both Philistines and Israelites to be as between the Lord, his **[R4216 : page 233]** people and their enemies. Hastening forward David threw his first stone, which struck the giant in the forehead and caused him to fall senseless. Directly David finished the conflict with Goliath's own sword, beheading him while the Israelites, their faith reviving, attacked the Philistines, whose courage fled.

It is supposed that Goliath wore a helmet with moveable front common in those days, and that he laughed at the youth who was coming against him, and in so doing threw back his head, allowing the vizor of his helmet to open, exposing his forehead. Others suppose that he reached for his javelin, which he carried in a sheath between his shoulders, and in reaching back for the javelin the helmet opened at the opportune moment and admitted David's stone. However the matter happened we cannot doubt that David was quite correct in his understanding of the matter; that divine providence supervised the entire transaction and brought the victory. Nor was such marksmanship with the sling an unusual thing in those times, for we read how

on another occasion 700 men of the tribe of Benjamin threw stones "to a hair's breadth." – Judges 20:16.

## **THE CHRISTIAN'S ADVERSARY AND CONFLICT**

What lesson can the "New Creation" of the present time draw from this story of olden time? David, whose name signifies beloved, in many respects typified the Christ, Head and Body. His experiences with Goliath illustrate well first of all our Lord's conflict with the Adversary during the forty-days' temptation in the wilderness. Our Lord's victory over Satan on that occasion, his loyalty to the Father and the work entrusted to him, his own self-sacrifice, meant the victory for all the world of mankind desirous of being in harmony with God and his arrangement. Did he not declare to us, "Fear not, I have overcome the world"? In overcoming Satan, the prince of this world, he was gaining at the same time a victory over all the hosts of evil and servants of sin. He stood faithful to God and to his covenant relationship and responsibility and hurled at the Adversary the pebble of truth – "It is written." As Goliath fell before David, so Satan was vanquished by our Lord, who declares, "I beheld Satan fall from heaven," and declared also as a result of his victory, "All power is given me in heaven and in earth," and sent forth his disciples in his name to similarly battle in his strength and to come off conqueror and to ultimately share with him in his Kingdom, which is to "bless all the families of the earth."

It is written of the Lord's faithful disciples, who shall constitute the Church of glory, that they must walk in his steps as he set the example. This means to them as to him a warfare against sin, its great representative and leader Satan, and all the hosts of deceived humanity who are on his side. Does not the Apostle intimate this when he says, We wrestle not with flesh and blood, but with wicked spirits in influential positions? (Eph. 6:12.) Our enemy is a giant in whose presence we are feeble

indeed. The Apostle calls him a wily foe and our Lord taught us to pray the Father, "Abandon us not in temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." Very evidently, then, we need divine assistance in our unequal contest, as did David in his.

**"NOT BY MIGHT, NOR BY POWER, BUT BY MY SPIRIT"**

All those whom the Lord accepts to probationary membership in the Body of Christ, have been previously anointed and come under the divine power and guidance. They have had their experiences, too, in struggling against evil in general, even as David had his experience with the lion and the bear, and those experiences in the Lord's providence were merely preparations for the great testing, the great conflict with the Adversary and his various devices for our injury. The natural thought in connection with such a contest is to put on armor similar to that of our opponent, as Saul offered his armor to David. It is for each of the Lord's people, however, to learn that victory cannot be won along worldly lines. We cannot fight evil with evil, wrong with wrong, boasting with boasting and slander with slander, hatred with hatred, etc. If we undertake so to do we shall surely lose in the battle. Our course, like that of David, must be full reliance upon the Lord and the use of the sling and pebble of truth. If we cannot conquer along these lines we cannot conquer at all. Who is sufficient for these things? – for such an unequal contest with the prince of darkness and all the hosts of sin? Surely the one who would have confidence in himself would be unwise; hence, as the Apostle says, we place our confidence in God; if we are loyal to him victory will be ours, if we are careless or unfaithful we shall not be of the David class – not be members of the glorious Body of Christ, in which event we shall never reign with him, even as David, who received the anointing, would never have reached the throne, if he had fought the giant with Saul's armor. **[R4217 : page 233]**

## **"WORKS OF THE FLESH AND OF THE DEVIL"**

The imperfections of the flesh with which we all must contend are indeed part of the works of the devil, for did he not in Eden accomplish the fall of our first parents, and thus the fall of our entire race into the sin and death condition against which we struggle in vain, except as we are rescued by him who loved us and bought us with his precious blood? But in addition to these inherited weaknesses of the flesh we must contend against the active works of the Adversary – not only his temptations to ourselves but his intrigues through mankind in general, for he is indeed the "one who now worketh in the hearts of the children of disobedience," and they are much more numerous than the children of obedience. Hence our assailants are manifold, and in many of their assaults upon us they have at least the sympathy of our fallen flesh, however antagonistic our hearts, our minds as New Creatures in Christ.

The Apostle helps us to get a view of the great enemy and the influences he is bringing to bear against us on every hand and every day. He sums them up as follows: "Now the works of the flesh are manifest which are these, – adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders [he that hateth his brother is a murderer], drunkenness [intoxication literally or symbolically with the spirit of the world, Babylon], revelings, and such like; of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in times past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God." – Gal. 5:19-21.

## **"WE WRESTLE NOT WITH FLESH AND BLOOD"**

Behold in this list the Goliath with whom we must contend! The special weakness of one may not be the special weakness of another, but the list which the Apostle has here provided is sure

to include the weak points of the flesh of every one of the Lord's consecrated [R4217 : page 234] people, every one who is a member of the David class, of the Beloved One, of the Christ. All who are anointed for the coming glory as kings and priests, as New Creatures, have a Goliath in their own flesh to be fought, and fought to a finish! Either the old nature must die or the new one must die. Exhorting along this line the Apostle says, Mortify, therefore, your members that are upon the earth – the downward tendency of your flesh. It must be killed, it must be beheaded, as was Goliath; but there can be no complete putting away of the earthly mind, the fleshly mind and its influence until first we in the name of the Lord have conquered by smiting it with the pebble of truth.

As we look over the above list of the works of the flesh and the devil, we find that they are all rooted in selfishness; and as we look to the Lord as our pattern as New Creatures we find that all the fruits and graces of the Spirit are reversely centered in love. In proportion, therefore, as the New Creature lives, grows and thrives in love, the old creature, the works of the flesh, will perish with its selfishness.

We might be inclined to reason amiss on the subject and to say with the Apostle, Having begun in the spirit, are you seeking to be perfect in the flesh? We might say, Surely all who have been begotten of the holy Spirit and who have reckoned themselves dead indeed to the flesh and its inclinations and desires – none of these, surely, could ever be influenced again to come under the Adversary's power and become a partaker of his spirit and participate in his works!

This is a wrong thought! It is possible for some of the Lord's true children to be thus overcome. True, if thoroughly overcome by the spirit of selfishness it would mean the death of the New Creature, and this would mean the Second Death. The path from



the new nature into the Second Death is not necessarily a very long one, but we have no reason to believe that it could be taken at merely one step. We remember that the new nature up to the present time, up to the time of our resurrection change, is but the new mind, the new will, the new disposition in harmony with the Lord, his righteousness, his love. We are to remember, as the Apostle suggests, that we have this new nature in an earthen vessel and that the earthen vessel has practically all of its original blemishes and fallen tendencies still as powerful as ever except as the new mind has these under its mastery and control; but if that mastery or control should be released even for a moment the result would be the awakening, the reviving of the old nature. And we may be sure that our Adversary is alert and fully realizes the situation and will do all in his power to put us off guard, even to the extent of endeavoring to make white appear black and black appear white before our judgment. The Lord very graciously shields us from temptations more than we are able to bear. Hence it is possible for us at all times to be overcome, not only in the infancy of our new nature, but also in its further development; but the testings permitted grow more severe, more crucial, as we near our spiritual graduation time. Nor can we object to this; it is exactly what we should expect.

The Apostle, following this line of thought, declares, "I keep my body under;" and again he says, "Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth" – your earthly ambitions, will, etc., everything in yourself that would tend toward envy, hatred, anger and strife – put these to death. Allow the new nature to have full sway and control in every thought, in every word, in every deed. And watch to this end; watch your thoughts, watch your words, watch your conduct. Many can watch their conduct who find it difficult to scrutinize and properly weigh their thoughts and their words. Truly the Apostle intimates that out of the heart proceeds envy, bitterness, evil speaking, back-biting and strife; unless they are in the heart the

mouth cannot utter them, for it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaketh.

## **"THE TONGUE IS A FIRE AND A WORLD OF INIQUITY"**

Alas, yes! our words do judge us; as the Master declared, "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." No wonder the prophet said, "I will set a guard upon my lips lest I sin with my mouth." The setting of a guard evidently means that we will practice great deliberation, great care in respect to everything that we say; that we should speak evil against none. Our evil speaking is not at all necessary to the Lord and to his cause; he is perfectly able to accomplish all of his purposes without our violating a single one of his wise arrangements on our behalf. If he is not wise enough to bring order out of confusion, surely we are not sufficiently wise, and it would be very presumptuous on our part to interfere with the Lord and his affairs, except strictly along the lines of the instruction of his Word. Let this be our authority; when he instructs us to speak let us speak, when he instructs us to be silent let us be silent. No other course is a safe one.

The Apostle declares the "tongue setteth on fire the course of nature, and is set on fire of Gehenna." (James 3:6.) In other words, that which fires the tongue to evil is a spark which belongs to the Second Death, for all anger, malice, envy, hatred, strife, evil speaking, back-biting, are all works of the flesh and of the devil, which are tending toward the Second Death. As the Apostle says in enumerating these, "They that do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God." (Gal. 5:21.) They that do such things, if they continue in that evil course, will not only fail to get a share in the Kingdom, but fail to get a share in the Great Company, and will receive their portion in Gehenna – the Second Death. This is no exaggerated teaching on our part; it is

the clear testimony of St. Peter and St. James. And not only is this the rule of this Gospel Age and the Church which is now on special trial, but the same will be the rule during the Millennium; those who will not come into harmony with the law of love, which is the opposite of all these works of the devil, will be counted as servants of sin and of Satan and will have their portion in the lake of fire, which is the Second Death. – Rev. 20:14.

When the Apostle speaks of the tongue as setting on fire the course of nature, we believe that he is expressing a truth in full harmony with that set forth by the Apostle Peter, when he tells us that the symbolic heavens and the symbolic earth shall surely be on fire. The tongue, that little member, will thus set on fire the course of nature and eventually bring in the great period of awful anarchy with which present institutions will go down, preparing the way for the Kingdom of the Lord under the whole heavens. Whoever has an ear to hear can already perceive that bitter tongues are moving rapidly in the direction of the igniting of the **[R4217 : page 235]** great fire which the Apostle delineates. Passions are being aroused in Church, State, financial and political circles. Selfishness is more and more getting into command until by and by, as the Scriptures declare, there will be no peace to him that goes out or comes in, but every man's hand will be against his neighbor.

If thus the tongue is to set on fire the course of nature in the nominal Church and in the social world, shall we suppose that the Church of the Living God, whose names are written in heaven, will be exempted from such trials, and shall we suppose that the tests will be less crucial with them than with the world? No, verily! We must expect that judgment will begin at the house of God and extend to the nominal house and to the world. It behooves each one to be awake on this subject of the unruly member, to bring ours into absolute submission to the will of the

Lord; that we shall speak only those things which are edifying; that we shall speak evil of no man; that our tongues wherewith we bless and praise God shall be used only in blessing and assisting and uplifting and strengthening the Lord's cause. **[R4218 : page 235]**

But since it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaketh we must keep our hearts with all diligence, we must remember their natural deceitfulness; we must be on guard lest they should deceive us now into thinking that evil is good, and that in promoting evil in speaking and slandering one another we are promoting good. This is a part of the artifice of the Adversary, and, as the Apostle says, "We are not ignorant of his devices." Let us, then, be more than ever on guard to scrutinize our motives, and not only so, but after finding good motives, let us scrutinize our methods and square them all with the Word of the Lord, especially remembering his instructions that we shall love one another as he has loved us – to the extent of laying down our lives for each other – and that we shall be obedient to him to the extent that we shall give heed to his Word, not forgetting his methods of procedure, as outlined to us in his own words. – Matthew 18:15-17.

=====