

## THE CHAMPION OF ISRAEL

Bullies are a vexation to the timid, whether at school or at work. I best recall my bully when as a small kid we played on the school yard. His name was Buddy Tardiff. He was the strongest, meanest kid on the block. He would push me around and the teacher would never catch him at it. Buddy was intimidating and he always got his way. He ruled by a reign of terror and fear.

There are nations and world leaders who rule by terror and intimidation. I remember the Premier of the U. S. S. R., Nikita Krushchev saying to America, "We will bury you." And the cold war and nuclear arms race was on.

Today's lesson is about two bullies in the Bible—Goliath and Satan. One of my favorite Bible stories is about David and Goliath. I have always favored the underdog. I guess because I've always been a pip squeek myself. David was surely an underdog. Let's look at the secret of his success in his early career so that we might understand our success against the big bully Satan.

"I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever, with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations. For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever; Thy faithfulness shalt Thou establish in the very heavens. I have made a covenant with My chosen, I have sworn unto David My servant, Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up Thy throne to all generations." Ps. 89:1-4.

This covenant with David was made after he became king, (2 Sam. 7); but it was in effect made long before. When David was yet a shepherd lad, the Lord sent Samuel to anoint him king over Israel. The anointing was accomplished, and David was the chosen king. Yet for a long time there was no visible evidence of it. Instead of donning royal robes and taking his place at the head of the people, he retained his shepherd's frock and staff, and continued at the head of his father's flock.

Not long after Samuel's visit to Bethlehem another messenger arrived for David, this time from the King. Saul was in distress and needed help. An evil spirit from the Lord was troubling him.

At his anointing the Spirit of God had come upon Saul, changing him into another man. Under its influence his way had been divinely directed, and so long as he yielded to it, his steps were ordered by the Lord. But he chose his own way, refusing counsel, and so the

Spirit of the Lord was driven from him. Without it he was like a ship without a rudder, for “it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (Jer. 10:23), and would certainly make shipwreck of himself and the nation committed to his care.

To prevent this it was necessary that he should be deprived of his influence to some extent. The Lord did not leave him entirely alone, for that would involve him in immediate ruin, but sent a spirit of evil, or sadness, upon him. Remorse and terror filled his mind, unfitting him for duty, and his state of mind soon became known among his servants.

They counseled him to send for a skillful player on the harp, who should dispel with cheering music his fits of melancholy. David’s name was recommended before him as of one “cunning in playing, and a comely person” (1 Sam 16:18) and Saul, hoping for relief, “sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, Send me David thy son, which is with the sheep” (1 Sam. 16:19).

So David passed from the cottage at Bethlehem to the court of the king at Gibeah. The lessons learned in communion with the God of nature, the views of His power manifested in the works of His hands, and the experience of His love in the daily round of shepherd life, had given David the needed preparation for his new duties. His simple faith and love and trust in God would form just the influence that Saul needed to be brought in contact with. The stricken heart of the afflicted king found comfort in David’s ministrations, “and he loved him greatly” (1 Sam. 16:21). “So Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him” (1 Sam. 16:23). Unhappily for him, the indecision which appeared in all his life kept him from retaining the blessing now granted.

Although armor-bearer to Saul, David still went to and fro between Bethlehem and the king’s house, keeping the sheep in the intervals of his attendance on Saul. During one of his visits home, Israel was again invaded by the Philistines, and the forces of Israel met them a few miles from the border which separated the two countries. At his father’s request, David set out for the camp, some fifteen miles distant, bearing provisions for his three oldest brothers, who were among the soldiers of Saul.

While David conversed with his brethren on the field of battle, a strange, imposing figure stalked into the open space between the two armies, and defied Israel to produce a man who could stand before

him in single combat. His appearance struck terror to the hearts of Israel, and as he thundered out his challenge they fled before him.

Truly it needed a brave man to face this giant. Standing nearly twelve feet high, with a coat of mail that weighed a hundred weight and a half, and armed with an enormous spear, the iron head of which alone weighed twenty pounds, there seemed but little hope of finding a champion bold enough to meet him.

Yet greater things than this had been done in the history of Israel, many a time. It was only one generation ago that the ark of God, captive and undefended by human strength, had gone through the cities of the Philistines like a destroying army, compelling reverence at every stage, and finally returning in acknowledged triumph to its own country; its sole defense being that it bore the name of the Lord. The Israelites seemed to have forgotten, so it was no wonder that the Philistines failed to remember, that the name of the Lord was a strong tower, for all who put their trust in Him. That was why one army gloried in the confidence which Goliath inspired in them, while the other, looking at his bulk, groaned in despair.

The Israelites were terrified by a great giant who came day after day out of the Philistine camp, and mocked and defied them. Notice what was the proposal that he made to them: "Choose you a man for you, and let him come down to me. If he be able to fight with me and kill me, then will we be your servants: but if I prevail against him and kill him, then shall ye be our servants and serve us." 1 Sam. 17:8, 9.

All the Israelites were very much distressed by the sight of this great giant, and by the words that he spoke. His great size and loud voice frightened out of their minds the precious promises of God, that He was with them to save them, and that one of them should "chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight" (Deut. 32:30). They were sore afraid and fled, and the man for whom the giant called, to come and fight with him, could not be found.

Can you see in all this a picture of our own sad, helpless condition without the one Man who alone can fight and conquer the great giant of evil who leads us all captive at his will, and goes about "as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour?" In his first fight with our father Adam Satan overcame and brought him into bondage, so that all his children became his slaves. Our only hope is in finding *a man* to conquer and slay the enemy, and deliver us from his taunts and cruel bondage.

Now watch carefully what followed in the case of the great giant Goliath, for God is here giving us a lesson of hope and comfort. In it we may read of the complete destruction of our old enemy Satan, and of the mighty deliverance that has been won for all his captives.

After many days there came a champion to the camp of Israel, sent by God to fight for His people. When he heard the proud words of the enemy of God's people, and saw their terrifying effect upon them, young David longed to show them all "that there is a God in Israel." Strong "in the name of the Lord of hosts" he went bravely forth to fight with Goliath.

David came before Saul and announced his intention of going out against the Philistine. It was Saul's place to go, as leader of the people, but his trust was in his own strength, and now, in that hour of need, it failed him. He attempted to set before David the perils of his undertaking, but David was not going in his own strength, and felt no doubt as to the issue of the conflict. Refusing Saul's armor, he took his sling and five smooth stones out of the brook and drew near to meet the Philistine.

When David offered to go out to fight Goliath, Saul clothed him with his own armor. He had a helmet of brass, and a coat of mail, just as the giant had. None of the men of Saul's army supposed that Goliath could be destroyed except with weapons like his own, and that was their mistake. If David had gone in Saul's armor, he would have been defeated; for the giant was more expert with such weapons than any of the men of Israel. If David had depended on Saul's sword, he would have been obliged to come into close contact with the giant, whose armor was much more powerful. So David went forth with only a sling and a *few* smooth stones. It seemed a foolhardy thing to do, and the giant derided him; but he gained the victory, because he went in the strength of the Lord. Let this be a lesson for all who have to meet the unconverted, the boasters, and the blasphemers. Do not think that you can conquer the world with worldly weapons. Do not spend time learning worldly tactics. "Put on the whole armor of God." Ephesians 6:11. We do not need to study error, when the only thing which can successfully meet it is truth.

David took his shepherd's staff and his sling, and chose five smooth stones out of the brook. With these he went against Goliath. The giant had a heavy suit of armor, a great sword in his hand, and a man carrying a strong shield before him. David had no armor and no spear. He trusted in God to deliver him.

When Goliath saw the shepherd boy coming he mocked him, and said that he would slay him and give his flesh to the fowls of the air. But David answered: "Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel." 1 Samuel 17:45.

Then David took a stone and slung it, and it sank into the giant's forehead. Goliath fell upon his face to the earth. David ran and took Goliath's own sword, and cut off his head. When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled.

David knew that God had given him the victory, and he ran to meet the giant, who fell down before him slain by a stone that David had taken from the brook. He wanted to show to both armies that the giant was really dead, so he cut off his great head and held it up for all to see.

What a change this made in the feelings of the two armies! The mocking Philistines fled in terror from the field of battle now they saw that their champion was dead, while the Israelites followed them with shouts of triumph.

It was a fearfully unequal contest. On one side was a man, bigger and stronger than all other; on the other the great and powerful Creator of heaven and earth, before whom all the nations are as a drop of a bucket. He might have gone forth against Goliath in terrible majesty, shaking the earth with thunder and smiting His antagonist with the lightning, but, being all-powerful, He was able to accomplish just as much with a smooth stone in the hand of a youth.

There was no reason why Saul, or anyone else in the army, should not have been used by the Lord to lay low the pride of the Philistines, except that they all had too much of it in their own hearts. They thought so much of themselves that the Lord was overlooked, and seemed too far off for any practical purpose. Yet God had called them that they should bear His name, and be His representatives, and in His name, they might have done what David did.

Who is the Man that has been found to meet and conquer for us our old enemy Satan, and has made a show of him openly, triumphing over him? "The Man Christ Jesus." He died "that He might destroy him that had the power of death, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Hebrew 2:14. 15.

"By force of arms we nothing can,  
Full soon we are downridden;  
But for us fights the proper Man,

Whom God Himself has bidden.  
Ask ye who is this same?  
*Christ Jesus is His name,*  
The Lord Sabbaoth's Son;  
He, and no other one,  
Shall conquer in this battle."

—(*Martin Luther.*)

Now if the children of Israel had not *known* that the giant was dead, they might still have trembled and feared and thought themselves the servants of the Philistines, and allowed them to keep them in bondage. But when they saw his head cut off and held on high, they knew that he was made an end of, and that their champion David had won their freedom. And not their freedom only, but David's victory had turned those who were before their masters into their slaves.

And so when Jesus won His complete victory over Satan, He made an open show of him, that all might be assured of their victory and freedom. He burst open the tomb, which is Satan's prison house; and when He Himself "came forth a majestic Conqueror," "many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and coming forth out of the tombs after His resurrection, they entered into the holy city and appeared unto many."

This experience is written for our learning that we may know in what our strength consists, and that we should learn not to fear difficulties or temptations on account of their great size and seeming strength. Our victory or defeat will depend entirely on whether we meet the enemy in the name of the Lord. Christ says, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in My name that will I do." John 14:13.

It was now apparent to all Israel that David was most suited to be their leader. In allowing another, young and inexperienced, to take the place of danger as the champion of Israel, Saul had confessed himself unfit for the post. David was no better in himself than anyone else, as He sadly proved in after years, but while he allowed God to work His will through him, great good would come to others thereby. God alone could help the people, and only as David revealed God, would his life and reign be a blessing.

Will you be the willing slaves of Satan, when you know that Jesus has won your freedom? Will you not rather, "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might," "resist the devil"? and the promise is that "he will flee from you." For Satan and his host know well, as did the Philistines, that their cause is lost and all their power taken away,—

they know that the victory is already won for all who trust in “the Man Christ Jesus.” 1 Timothy 2:5.

He who had faithfully fed and guided the sheep, was to feed and guide God’s great flock of Israel, and the lessons learned among his sheep taught him how to do this.

But David was only a type of the one true Shepherd of Israel, who also came forth out of Bethlehem. Of Him God said, He “shall feed My people Israel.” He Himself is “the Bread of Life,” the true bread which came down from heaven to give life to the world. All who eat of this Bread share His everlasting life and live and feed upon Him for ever.

David is the type of Christ the Good Shepherd. Here we see him again as the type of Christ, the great Champion of mankind, and our Deliverer from the cruel power of all our enemies.

Once in his flight from the wrath of Saul, who was bent on taking his life, David came to the high priest at Nob, and received food. One of Saul’s ruffians, Doeg the Edomite was present, and went and told Saul that Ahimelech the high priest had inquired of the Lord for David, and had given him bread and the sword of Goliath. This was enough for the mad monarch. He at once called to him the high priest, and all the priests that were with him, the entire family of priests, and although they were innocent of the slightest disloyalty, he ordered them, eighty-five in all, to be slaughtered simply because one of them had performed a kindness to David. This shows the bitterness of Saul’s rage against David.

“And one of the sons of Ahimelech the son of Ahitub, named Abiathar, escaped, and fled after David. And Abiathar showed David that Saul had slain the Lord’s priests. And David said unto Abiathar, I knew it that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul; I have occasioned the death of all the persons of thy father’s house. Abide thou with me, fear not; for he that seeketh my life seeketh thy life; but with me thou shalt be in safeguard.” 1 Sam. 13:20-23.

Such language would have been vain presumption if it had not been for the promise of God. As it was, it showed sublime confidence. David, an outlaw, who was so hated that not only those who showed him a kindness, but even the relatives of such ones, were ruthlessly slain, said to a refugee, Abide with us, fear not; the same one is seeking the lives of us both; but you are safe with me.

At another time, David in his flight from Saul took refuge in a cave in the wilderness of Ziph. But the Ziphites were treacherous, and, desiring to curry favor with Saul, they went to him, and betrayed David's hiding-place. Not only did they tell Saul where David was, but they added: "Now therefore, O king, come down according to all the desire of thy soul to come down; and our part shall be to deliver him into the king's hand." 1 Samuel 23:20.

This pleased Saul wonderfully, but as he had often failed to seize David, just when he thought he had him fast, he determined not to be foiled this time. So he sent the Ziphites back: with instructions to take particular note of all David's hiding-places, and come again with information, and then, said he, "I will go with you, and it shall come to pass, if he be in the land, that I will search him out throughout all the thousands of Judah." 1 Samuel 23:23.

This plan was carried out, and Saul and his men went to the place where David was; "and Saul and his men compassed David and his men round about to take them." 1 Samuel 23:26. Just then, however, a messenger came to tell Saul that the Philistines had invaded the land, and so he was compelled to turn back, just as David seemed to be in his grasp. Thus the Lord delivered David; but before this deliverance appeared, just when the men of Ziph were leading Saul and his force to his hiding-place, when it seemed as though escape was impossible, David took his harp and sang this song of trust:—

"Save me, O God, by Thy name, and judge me by Thy strength. Hear my prayer, O God; give ear to the words of my mouth. For strangers are risen up against me, and oppressors seek after my soul; they have not set God before them. Behold, God is mine helper, the Lord is with them that uphold my soul. He shall reward evil unto mine enemies; cut them off in Thy truth. I will freely sacrifice unto Thee; I will praise Thy name, O Lord; for it is good. For He hath delivered me out of all trouble; mine eye hath seen his desire upon mine enemies." Ps. 54:1-7.

David did not say, The Lord will deliver me, but, "The Lord hath delivered me." How was that, since he was in a great danger at the time that the psalm was composed? Why, the Lord had done it by His promise. The promise to David was just the same to him as though he had already seen the deliverance. Yea, he had seen it, since faith makes one see as present reality the things that are yet to come.

David was not saved nor did he trust in God because of his own goodness, but because of God's mercy. David was a sinful man, as



are all men; but his heart was tender, he acknowledged his sinfulness and God's righteousness, and believed God's promise. It is natural for men to think that God is unrighteous because they are; and the more they know themselves to be unrighteous, the more they think God to be the same. Thus it is: It is most common for one to say, "I am so great a sinner, I dare not believe that God forgives my sins." But God has declared that His righteousness consists in the forgiveness of sins. 1 John 1:9. Therefore to say or to think that God cannot or will not forgive sins, is to charge Him with being unrighteous. Thus it is that sinners often make God out to be as bad as they are.

Not so with David; sinful as he was, he would insist that God was nevertheless righteous and faithful. God had promised him that he should be king, and not only that, but that his throne should stand for ever. But this promise was through Christ, for the throne of David was the throne of the Lord (1 Chron. 29:33), and the promise that he should sit on the throne and that it should be established for ever, was the promise of everlasting righteousness which God would freely give him through Christ.

So David's confidence was in God's promise. God had said that he should be king, and no man or men could frustrate God's purpose. It was not for David's sake but for the Lord's own sake, to vindicate His kindness and faithfulness, that God preserved David, and in this David was confident.

"And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that He hath raised up Jesus again." Acts 13:32, 33.

To every one the call is sent, "Come ye to the waters! And he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." Isaiah 55:1.

The promise is, "Yea, He hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood," and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father." Revelation 1:5, 6. And the "Holy Spirit of promise" is the anointing oil that assures us of this.

Therefore the Lord says, "Incline your ear, and come unto Me; hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." Isaiah 55:3. As surely as David was delivered from His enemies, because God had made him a promise, just so surely shall we be delivered, "if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end."