

Faith and Five Smooth Stones
by Dr. Lee Roberson

Text: 1 Sam. 17:45

INTRODUCTION:

Big, boasting Goliath represents an angry, raging world seeking to destroy all that is good and godly. Fearful, trembling Israel represents a faithless people who believe in God but, through weakness of faith, fail to conquer in His name. Strong, quiet David represents the Christian whose faith is in God and whose dependence is in the power of God. Every schoolboy knows the story of David and Goliath. The Philistines were the old enemies of Israel. In the days of King Saul they were forever fighting against God's chosen people. Israel was often the victor in the conflicts, but then Goliath took the lead of the Philistines. The situation became dark and foreboding. The Israelites had pitched their camp on one side of the mountain, and the Philistines on the other side. There was a valley between. From out of the army of the Philistines came a giant named Goliath of Gath. He was a tremendous fellow. Some say that his height ran to almost twelve feet. For many days this giant stood and cried unto the armies of Israel: "Why are ye come out to set your battle in array? Am I not a Philistine, and ye servants to Saul? choose you a man for you, and let him come down to me. If he be able to fight with me, and to 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....I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together "-II Samuel 17:8-10.

When Saul and the Israelites heard these words, they were dismayed and afraid.

But God always has a man for every situation. He may seem a very unlikely person, but there is always someone to stand for God's cause. In this instance it was David, a shepherd boy, sent to carry food to his brothers in the army of Saul. As he talked with them, the giant came forth and gave his challenge. David heard these words. He saw the people were afraid. He asked why they allowed this thing to go on. Finally, he turned to King Saul and said, "Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine."

Saul weakly tried to dissuade him, but David gave his arguments and determined to go against Goliath. Saul's armor was put on David, but the young shepherd lad refused it. His equipment, as he went against the giant, was his staff and five smooth stones out of the brook and his sling.

The great giant came forth from his place. When he saw the boy, he said, "Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves?" It was an insult to send

such a small youth out against him.

David's first words to the giant indicate his strength. "I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel. . . for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hands."

In dignified manner, the Philistine arose and came to meet David. As David ran to meet him, he took a stone, put it in the sling, and threw it at the Philistine. It struck him in the forehead, and he fell upon his face to the earth. The victory was won.

In this simple story we find a lesson on how to face our difficulties.

The enemy is all about us. On every hand there are hindrances, obstacles and difficulties to be overcome. The success of your life depends on how you face your trials.

David had three things to help him as he faced the giant:

I. COURAGE

We admire courage anywhere we find it, whether it be on the battlefield, in the business office, in the school or in society. The need in every field today is for courageous men.

We need men of courage in the pulpits of our land. Men of stamina and courage are needed in politics. World leadership is suffering for the lack of men of courage.

It takes danger to bring forth courage. We often do not know of its

presence in our life until the hour of danger.

There is an Oriental legend which tells of a barbarian chief tain who thought to honor Alexander the Great by giving him three noble dogs of matchless courage.

Shortly after the chieftain had gone, Alexander decided to test the dogs.

He had a stag brought before them, but the dogs only yawned and went to sleep. Then he had a hind and an antelope put into the park with them. But the dogs were not interested.

Alexander, certain that the dogs were worthless, had them killed. A few days later, the chieftain returned to ask about his favorites. When he was told what had been done to them, he cried, "O Alexander, you are a great king, but you are a very foolish man. You showed them a stag and a hind and an antelope, and they paid no attention. But if you had turned a lion and a tiger loose on them, you would have seen what brave dogs I have given you." Yes, it is danger that brings forth courage.

It was danger of death that displayed the courage of the three Hebrew children. All threats and all danger could not make them bow down before an idol.

It was danger that showed the courage of Daniel. No power on earth could stop him from praying unto God.

It was danger that showed the courage of Paul, the missionary. He did not flinch from any adversary or any difficulty.

Danger reveals weakness. King Saul was a big, strong, husky specimen of mankind. He was head and shoulders above his fellow Israelites. He could brag and boast, but his life was not in danger. But in the face of Goliath he began to shake like a leaf in the wind.

Someone may be questioning, "Why this weakness on the part of King Saul?"

The answer is not hard to find. His life was undermined by disobedience to God. Just a short time before the incident now before us, King Saul had been sent by the Lord to destroy King Ahab and the Amalekites. He disobeyed the order of the Lord and spared the king and much of the best of the sheep and oxen.

Through Samuel, God spoke a plain word on the subject of obedience.

"Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king."

Lack of courage quite often is traceable to lack of obedience to God. The preacher or any Christian who lacks courage to stand for God will often be found as disobedient and unseparated from the world.

Danger showed Israel to be a cowardly people. They had not walked in the way which God desired of them. They had murmured against Him, begged for a king, and in many ways shown their dissatisfaction of God's dealing with them. In the hour of danger, they were unable to rest upon His promises

and to face the army without fear.

Have courage as you face your difficulties. Let your courage stem from your assurance of God with you-and you with God.

II. MEMORY

As David went forth to face the giant, memory-the memory of God's working through him-went with him.

When Saul remonstrated with David about his desire to fight the Philistine, David said:

Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock:

'And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him.

"Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this unctur cumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God.

"David said moreover, The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. "-I Sam. 17:34-37.

It is interesting to notice King Saul's response to this word of David:

"Go, and the Lord be with thee." This was a very pious statement for a king, backed by his large army, to make as he sent forth the shepherd boy against a great giant.

David went forth with the memory of God's power and God's deliverance in former days.

It seems that Saul should have done some remembering also. He should have remembered the great heroes of the faith—Abraham, Moses, Gideon, Barak, Samson and others.

Saul should have remembered God's power and gone forth to fight the giant. His name might have been recorded with the great of the ages. But, no, he was a coward; and he sat down and permitted a boy to fight in his place.

The soldiers of Israel should have been remembering also. How strange that all the mighty events of history were forgotten! Think of the mighty march of God with His people from the land of Egypt to Palestine. Think of God's deliverance from a thousand enemies, His daily manifestations of power and providence.

But in this hour of calamity, Israel forgot, also, the work of God in their behalf.

Here is one of our serious mistakes as we face our daily trials, temptations and difficulties: we fail to remember all that God has done for us.

Christian, remember the salvation of the Lord. The same God who saved you

from eternal doom can deliver you from every difficulty.

Remember God's provision and protection through the days of the past. His power has not changed. As He once delivered you, so will He now deliver you.

Let memory work for you as it did for David. Remember the power of God and His past performances in your behalf.

Remember your past failures because of dependence on self. The Lord who once helped you will help you again. This was the argument which David gave to Saul. Memory was walking with him.

III. FAITH

David had faith in God. Though skillful in the use of the sling and stone, it was not his skill that won the battle, but his faith. David believed that God was with him, so he could say, "If God be for me, then who can be against me?"

King Saul looked toward himself and his knees trembled.

Israel looked toward human leadership and it is written, "They were dismayed, and greatly afraid."

Goliath, the giant, had faith in himself and soon died. What a monstrous man he was! His height was perhaps eleven feet and four inches. His armor was tremendously heavy. His spear was like a weaver's beam. He trusted in himself and his own power. He did not look to any god, even the false gods

of his own nation. He rested in the arm of flesh and soon dropped in death.

David had faith in God. He used the means at hand-the stones and the sling. But it was his faith in the Almighty which delivered his people.

Think of faith for a moment.

Faith cheerfully faces hardships. It does not complain nor find

Faith in God overcomes obstacles. David was just a youth, and the giant was a mature man of wide experience.

Faith looks beyond all difficulties to God who is greater than all.

Faith in God wins the victory every time. " And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

How do you face your difficulties? Whatever they may be- financial, domestic, personal, religious-this story will show us the way to victory.

Have courage-courage born out of faithfulness and of obedience unto God.

Remember God's past performances and the failures of the flesh. Remember the Bible stories of victory, and remember that God changes not.

Have faith in God. Don't look at the storms and the tempests about you, but look up unto God. It is He who gives the victory. David said, "I come to thee in the name of the Lord. . .

The victorious life is the goal of every child of God. This can be realized today.

The story before us is also a lesson to lost people. Goliath, though big and furious and boasting, was weak and ineffectual. Goliath illustrates the need of God in every life. Come to Christ. Receive Him today. Enter into peace and joy now.

Faith As the brightest star in the firmament of grace. It treads down seeming impossibilities, and it strides to victory over mountains of stupendous hindrances. It enthrones Jesus as King of the inner man. It kindles and fans the flame of love, and it opens the lips of praise and prayer. Henry Law.