

SCRIPTURE LESSON

TEXT I SAM. 17:40 And he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag which he had, even in a scrip; and his sling was in his hand: and he drew near to the Philistine.

41 And the Philistine came on and drew near unto David; and the man that bare the shield went before him.

42 And when the Philistine looked about, and saw David, he disdained him: for he was but a youth, and ruddy, and of a fair countenance.

43 And the Philistine said unto David, Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves? And the Philistine cursed David by his gods.

44 And the Philistine said to David, Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field.

45 Then said David to the Philistine, 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, whom thou hast defied.

46 This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of

the host of the Philistines this day unto 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.

47 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.

48 And it came to pass, when the Philistine arose, and came and drew nigh to meet David, that David hasted, and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine.

49 And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slang it, and smote the Philistine in his forehead, that the stone sunk into his forehead; and he fell upon his face to the earth.

50 So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him; but there was no sword in the hand of David.

51 Therefore David ran, and stood upon the Philistine, and took his sword, and drew it out of the sheath thereof, and slew him, and cut off his head therewith. And when the Philistines saw their champion was dead, they fled.

David Against Goliath

Lesson Text: I Samuel 17:40-51

Related Scriptures: I Samuel 17:1-58; I Corinthians 1:26-31;
Psalms 18:30-41; 44:1-8

TIME: 1023 B.C.

PLACE: Valley of Elah

GOLDEN TEXT—“Then said David to the Philistine, 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, whom thou hast defied” (I Samuel 17:45).

Lesson Exposition

DAVID’S COURAGE AND PREPARATION—I Sam. 17:40-41

As I Samuel 17 opens, Israel was again facing their old archenemies, the Philistines. There was something of a standoff between the two armies, each facing off at the valley of Elah, about seventeen miles southwest of Jerusalem. Challenging the Israelites each day was the Philistine champion, a giant from Gath named Goliath.

Goliath is described as being more than nine feet tall, wearing heavy armor, and carrying a huge spear (I Sam. 17:4-7). No one in Saul’s army was a match for this giant. No one was willing to accept Goliath’s offer to engage him directly, even with the promise that the entire Philistine army would submit to slavery if someone could prevail over their champion (vss. 8-10).

David’s three older brothers were in Saul’s army, and their father had sent David to check on them. Arriving at the battlefield, David learned of Goliath’s daily challenge. As far as David was concerned, Goliath was not only challenging Israel’s

army but Israel’s God as well (I Sam. 17:26).

Saul dressed David in the typical armor of the day, likely concluding the shepherd boy needed all the help he could get. But David was not trained in its use and found the armor too cumbersome.

Instead, David took with him what he was used to (his staff and sling) and made his way to the brook. There he selected five smooth stones and put them into his shepherd’s bag. The word “scrip” (I Sam. 17:40) means a pouch and is simply another name for the bag.

The sling should not be confused with the modern slingshot. The ancient sling was usually a long piece of leather or cloth with a stone placed in a pocket in the middle. It was swung round and round in the air, and then one end of the sling was released, allowing the stone to hurtle toward its target.

DAVID’S CONFIDENCE AND DECLARATION—I Sam. 17:42-47

Goliath’s disdain (I Sam. 17:42-45). Being the giant and man of war that he

was, Goliath felt insulted that a mere youth was being sent out to engage him in battle. David was “ruddy” (vs. 42); that is, his face had a healthy, red color. A “fair countenance” could be understood as “handsome.” Not at all impressed with David’s physical appearance, Goliath “disdained him.” “Winning a contest against a crudely armed, underage challenger would not be particularly prestigious for the Philistine giant” (Bergen, 1, 2 Samuel, B&H).

David’s declaration (I Sam. 17:45-47). David’s confidence was not just in his ability with the sling, a weapon he no doubt had used many times in protecting his flock. David’s trust was in the Lord. To come in “the name of the Lord” was to come in His strength and power. Goliath “disdained” (vs. 42) David, but the giant had actually “defied” (vs. 45) Israel’s God by his words.

David’s confidence in the Lord was so great that he knew he would be victorious over the giant that very day. While it is not stated, it is apparent that David’s strong faith was the basis of his confidence.

DAVID’S VICTORIOUS CONQUEST— I Sam. 17:48-51

The combat (I Sam. 17:48-49). If Goliath was typical of a person of great stature, he probably moved slowly. Being both a big target and possibly a slow-moving one, this would be advantageous to David’s plan for victory.

As David ran toward the giant, he quickly fetched one of the stones he had in his pouch. Placing it in his sling, he let it fly toward the giant. The stone could not have hit the giant in a more vulnerable spot. As we might say, Goliath was hit right between the eyes, probably one of the few spots unprotected by his armor. The stone struck Goliath with such force that it “sunk into his forehead” (vs. 49).

The conclusion (I Sam. 17:50-51). While slings were used in ancient warfare, they apparently were not typically the weapons of choice. More common were swords, spears, and arrows. This makes it even more amazing that David was able to prevail over Goliath “with a sling and with a stone.”

Since their champion was dead, the Philistines made an immediate retreat. Not letting this opportunity slip away, Saul’s army pursued them a great distance and was victorious over them (I Sam. 17:52). David took the head of Goliath to Jerusalem (vs. 54), no doubt as a trophy for all to see.

Once Saul realized what a valuable asset David was to the army, he did not allow David to return home (I Sam. 18:2). He made David a commander in the army, and David quickly became the hero of the people (vs. 5) because everyone was lauding the success of the young officer (vss. 6-7).

—John Alva Owston.

QUESTIONS

1. Who was Goliath, and what challenge did he present to the Israelites?
2. How did David initially end up on the battlefield?
3. What weapons did David take with him into the battle?
4. What was a sling, and how was it used?
5. What does the Bible say about David’s physical appearance?
6. How did Goliath respond when he saw David?
7. In what manner did David approach the giant?
8. Why do you think David was so confident of victory?
9. What happened when Goliath was hit with the stone?

10. How did the Philistine army react to David's triumph over Goliath?

—John Alva Owston.

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. Our faith and the simple objects we dedicate to God will accomplish His divine purpose (I Sam. 17:40).
2. People of faith should not be intimidated by the size of their problems (vss. 41-42).
3. Our faith in God is tested when the unsaved mock and threaten (vss. 43-44).
4. When we know that we are on God's side, we can speak boldly to our critics (vss. 45-47).
5. God will deliver whom it pleases Him to deliver, and we can trust Him completely (vss. 48-49).
6. God empowers believers to slay the giants in their lives (vss. 50-51).

—Wardell Miller.

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

1. David approached his foe with five stones and a sling. What are the weapons of our warfare (II Sam. 17:40; cf. II Cor. 10:4-5)?
2. Why does God prefer to use people who appear weak to do battle against the strong (II Sam. 17:42-43; cf. vss. 33-37)?
3. When David faced Goliath, he was not afraid (vss. 45-46). How can believers face their spiritual giants today without fear?
4. How should contemporary believers prepare themselves for spiritual warfare (cf. Eph. 6:13-18)?

5. In what ways does God stand with us during hard times?

6. Why is it important to tell others about what the Lord has done?

Golden Text *Illuminated*

“Then said David to the Philistine, 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, whom thou hast defied” (I Samuel 17:45).

To David, it was not important how large Goliath appeared, how well armored he was, how large his spear and shield were, or even what an experienced warrior he was. What mattered to David was that the reputation of the Lord had been blasphemed openly, and that was an offense that could not go unpunished.

No wonder Samuel referred to David as “a man after [God's] own heart” (I Sam. 13:14). Even after David's fall into the great sins of adultery and murder (cf. II Sam. 11:1-27), God continued to be with him through the consequences of his sins (the death of the child he had conceived with Bath-sheba and the rebellion and death of his son Absalom [cf. 12:10-12]).

David was zealous for the cause of the Lord, but that did not primarily involve killing blasphemous giants. Rather, it had much more to do with understanding his own lowly place (even as God's anointed king) before the holy Lord Yahweh and seeing others as fellow sinners in need of the Lord's mercy and grace. You too can be a man or woman after God's own heart if you can confess with Paul, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief” (I Tim. 1:15)!

—John Lody.