



FEED MY SHEEP

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Battling Our “Philistines”

Anyone who attended Sunday School for any length of time as a child undoubtedly was taught the story of David and Goliath. It is a great story for children. But once we have become adult Christians, many of us tend to ignore or skim over the story. This is unfortunate since it deprives us from encountering truths beyond the surface story of “youthful, little hero defeats big, old bad guy.”

The story is somewhat lengthy by Bible standards, told in the 58 verses of the seventeenth chapter of 1 Samuel. There are numerous types and shadows evident in the story, but in so small a space as this monograph, we must confine ourselves to eliciting just a few. (Our one-hour lecture of this story on tape provides much more detail than we can set forth here. Titled *Goliath Meets the FlintStone*, tape #390 is available for \$4 plus \$2 s + h.)

The first seven verses set the stage, describing how the armies of the Philistines faced off against the armies of Israel. In ancient days it was not uncommon for one soldier from each army to fight in proxy for the entire nation. The nation whose man lost in the one-on-one combat was obligated to surrender. These verses also provide a physical description of the Philistine combatant—an enormous individual, approximately nine and one-half feet tall.

The Bible’s critics sometimes point to this as an example of why the Bible cannot be trusted. It is a ridiculous height, they say. But anyone who has seen professional basketball players in recent years might question just who is being ridiculous. There are now a goodly number of players who are over seven feet tall

and a rookie player from China was just drafted to play for the Houston Rockets who is 7’-5”. This author is personally acquainted with an individual who has a cousin who is 8’-4”!

As the story begins, Goliath, the Philistine giant, advances to within earshot of the Israelite ranks and taunts them to send a man out to fight. He does this day after day for 40 days (v. 16). Forty is the number which symbolizes testing. How did Israel match up to the test?

1 Samuel 17:11 When Saul and all Israel heard those words of the Philistine, they were dismayed, and greatly afraid.

They were failing the test miserably and disgracefully due to fear. It has often been said that the leader of a nation is a reflection of the minds and hearts of its people. People say we get the kind of leaders we deserve. Here we see that the king himself is afraid and the army reflects the same fearful spirit of their leader. Since God had abandoned Saul to his own devices and had sent an evil spirit upon him, Saul would naturally be terrified.

The Saul church vs. the David church

The same principle applies to the church. Ministers are a reflection of their congregations. Saul-type ministers and Saul-mindset congregations go together. And David-type ministers will attract flocks who seek the mindset of David. In other words, people will gravitate towards a minister who reflects their own spiritual status.

Some Christians are merely looking for entertainment dressed up in a religious package. There is plenty of that on “religious” television and in numerous pulpits. Others are drawn to ministers who major in telling their adherents that the rapture is imminent. Plenty of that drivel is available also. Still others gravitate towards ministers who rant and rave *continuously* about various social issues and the “bad guys.” (This is not to say that evil should not be exposed from the pulpit, but we are referring here to the extreme examples.) By keeping the attention of their congregations focused on the bad guys, these ministers can remain popular because it relieves their listeners of having to look inside themselves too much. That can be painful.

But there are some who seek to learn how they can grow in virtue and strength of character and be like David. These Christians are more focused on the “bad guy” within. Though the introspection is often painful, it is the only way to grow spiritually and to qualify for overcomership. We will pick up on this theme later.

Viewing the story from the corporate instead of the personal perspective now, Saul and his armies are terrified of the giant Philistine. Why? Because Israel had backslidden spiritually in these years of Saul’s reign. They and their king were no longer full of faith and confidence in Yahweh to deliver them against an apparently superior enemy. So it is in the church and in the United States today. As goes the church, so goes the nation.

We have backslidden seriously as a nation. Consequently, our freedoms have been chipped away for many decades. The church by and large has been ineffective and mute as this has occurred. Now, post-911, instead of a very gradual erosion, many more liberties are poised to disappear in a torrent of new and draconian laws under the excuse of “homeland security.” In other words, the people’s great fear of “Philistine” terrorism, (allegedly) from without, has paralyzed them into inaction against the “Philistines” within. Incidentally, the word “Philistine” means “immigrant.” Curiously, some people have been in this land for generations and are still immigrants in a sense. Prophetically, there are Philistines in the land.

However, all hope is not lost. Even when the nation as a whole is at a low ebb spiritually, God always has a remnant, and this is where David is intro-

duced. From this fact and other biblical examples, we can derive the principle that all the nation need not be righteous for God to deliver it; only a remnant. David is the preeminent type of Christ. It is Christ will deliver His people from the “Philistines” in America. David visits the men at the front lines and is briefed on the situation.

25 And the men of Israel said, Have ye seen this man that is come up? surely to defy Israel is he come up: and it shall be, that the man who killeth him, the king will enrich him with great riches, and will give him his daughter, and make his father’s house free in Israel.

One of the rewards for slaying the giant was the privilege of marrying the king’s daughter. Looking at the type simplistically, we see this indicates that Christ marries the daughter of the Saul church. From another perspective, David typically symbolizes the *corporate* Christ, which is Jesus as the Head of the body and the overcomers as the rest of His body. Therefore, it will be Jesus and the overcomers who will marry the daughter of the Saul church, i.e., the non-overcomer Christians. At the front lines, David is rebuked scathingly by his brother.

28 And Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spake unto the men; and Eliab’s anger was kindled against David, and he said, Why camest thou down hither? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle.

We have stated previously that it is highly unlikely that Samuel confided in David’s brothers what the full significance of David’s anointing was. Here we witness David receiving treatment similar to that which Joseph experienced from his brothers. David is essentially accused of being irresponsible (“where did you leave the sheep?”) and of being proud and arrogant. All were false charges. As David, so Jesus. He, too, was castigated, mocked and imputed bad motives by the Judeans. But David answers his brother in true Christ-like character—a soft response without malice.

David finally comes before King Saul as one who has volunteered to fight the Philistine giant on behalf of the nation. What could he say that would persuade Saul to allow him to fight Goliath? In verses

34-37, David recites how as a shepherd he once killed a bear and a lion in one-on-one combat to save some sheep. He was confident he could also defeat Goliath.

Saul had a critical decision to make here. If David lost to Goliath, then all Israel would be surrendered to Philistine domination. Clearly, it was the providence of God that turned the heart of Saul to approve of David being the proxy warrior for Israel.

David had just narrated to Saul a two-minute résumé of the experiences of his young life. Do the experiences of a person's childhood and teenage years have any effect on their later life? Obviously. Can we look back on our youth and early adult years and see how God was training us for things we did later or perhaps for the role we are now fulfilling?

David was a shepherd boy. In our urban society today, perhaps many are not aware that this was a very low status occupation. Perhaps it would be comparable today to working at Wendy's or bagging groceries at the supermarket. But teens and young adults can look to the model of David. Look upon it as training. What is God trying to teach you through those experiences? How to get along with people? That is for sure, but there will be certain unique experiences and lessons that a particular "entry-level" job will teach us—provided we are attuned and teachable. This speaks of our attitude about our job. A sour attitude will prevent us from seeing what we are supposed to be learning.

God placed David in the lowly occupation of shepherding a flock of sheep. But this was preparation for shepherding a nation whom God called His sheep. During those years, David became a master of the slingshot, and the outdoor life prepared him for living in the wilderness later as a fugitive from King Saul.

Do you think that because David worked many years with sheep that his approach to being ruler of the people might be different from a man like Saul who had spent his youth and early adulthood driving asses and other cattle? These things would have a profound influence. We all are playing out the patterns which were imprinted upon our psyches in our early years.

This is not to say that people cannot change. They certainly can and do and that is what the process of salvation is all about. Putting on the mind of Christ is developing the character traits of Christ. It is a *personality* change, our *soul* is being saved. One of the

most dramatic changes was the New Testament Saul who became Paul. This is essentially what should be happening to all Christians who are growing spiritually. We should be changing from Sauls to Pauls. If we are not, then we are spiritually stagnant—and more likely, backsliding.

In 1 Samuel 17:38 & 39, King Saul attempts to outfit David with his own weapons and armor. But David refused the conventional armor and weaponry. Rather, he goes to battle the giant with faith, trust and confidence in Yahweh, and with those weapons of a shepherd with which he was familiar, his staff and sling.

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.

Our personal Philistines

We saw earlier how the Philistines symbolize immigrants which is a corporate or national interpretation. Now let us return to the theme of introspection and the "bad guy" within. For on the personal, spiritual level, the Philistines represent the flesh, our carnal nature. The champion of the flesh is a giant named Goliath. The Scripture elsewhere indicates that Goliath had four brothers. So also are there five giants of the flesh.

The five giants of the flesh are our five senses. David picked up one stone for each giant. In order to take possession of our personal Promised Land—which is ultimately our immortal, glorified bodies—we need to conquer these five giants. Our senses are giants because they are the means through which we are tempted in all the realms of the flesh: by the things we see; by things we hear; by various aromas of food, tobacco, drink, perfumes and other scents; by the sense of taste and by the sense of touching.

The senses are not evil in and of themselves. They are very good and without them we could scarcely be considered alive. They are the media through which we experience God's creation. But they also have potential for abuse. When we misuse them is when we identify them as the Philistine giants of our flesh. To be victorious and occupy our Promised

Land, we need to stone these giants and cut off their heads.

Does that mean we should gouge out our eyes, cut off our ears, noses, tongues and hands? Of course not; and neither did Jesus mean such instruction literally in Matthew 18:9. It is a spiritual battle. If we are Christians, then we are all fighting this battle against these giants every day. This is our sanctification process. But then, how do we stone these giants?

By putting on the mind of Christ. Christ in you is becoming manifest (in part). Since Christ Jesus is the perfected and Greater David, then by seeking to emulate David and his godly character, we are also, to a significant extent, putting on the mind of Christ. He is the Stone cut out without hands (Dan. 2:34). This Stone “kills” our fleshly nature, our Philistine giants. As our personality and character (soul) are changed by the action of the Holy Spirit, the temptations to abuse our senses are beaten back; they are being “Stoned” to death.

This Stone becomes a great mountain (symbolic of a kingdom) and fills the whole earth (Dan. 2:35). How? One soul, one person at a time. The mind of Christ in you, Christian reader, combined with the mind of Christ in other Christian “Davids,” and on and on. That is what eventually makes up the Stone Kingdom, with Christ as Head. The Stone Kingdom will eventually cover the entire planet, because God says that eventually *all* will know Him from the least to the greatest, and the glory of the knowledge of God will cover the whole earth. (Num. 14:21; Hab. 2:14)

As David approaches Goliath to battle, the giant now directs personal psychological warfare at David (verses 41-44). Through these mind-games, the Philistine is trying to destroy David’s confidence and break his spirit. Goliath ridicules David for not coming to face him with conventional weapons. But David does not let the boasts and claims of the Philistine frighten him or take his mind from his focus on God and his determination to win the victory.

Let’s apply this. Both Saul and David knew that if anyone attempted to fight Goliath on his terms, with conventional weapons, it would be futile. So, too, we cannot fight the flesh on its own terms. One way that Christians try, though, is by thinking they can conquer sins of the flesh by sheer will-power and/or various forms of personal discipline. Monks and others carried

this to an extreme when they practiced self-flagellation.

Rather, we must win with the unconventional weapons of prayer and faith, with all our confidence in the blood of Jesus and in His *grace* and mercy. Incidentally, David picked up five stones. The number five symbolizes grace and thus we are saved by grace (Eph. 2:8). It is only by God’s grace through faith that we can achieve victory over the five giants of our flesh.

Notice how David responded to Goliath’s mind-games. He did not boast of his *own* strength, but he framed his return volleys of psychological warfare in terms of the power and authority of Yahweh.

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 YHWH of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.

46 This day will YHWH 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 YHWH saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is YHWH’s, and he will give you into our hands.

If we are to become like David and Christ, if we are to become overcomers today in all realms, this is one of the most important lessons we need to learn. God put us into captivity to modern Mystery Babylon (or Philistines, depending which type we are viewing), and He will deliver us, but not by sword or spear. The arm of flesh and conventional weapons will fail us. The battle is Yahweh’s and He will give them into our hand when God’s timetable decrees it is time.

Feed My Sheep is a part of the teaching ministry of James W. Bruggeman and is sent out freely upon request. The tithes and gifts of those who are fed by it make it possible for us to continue in ministry. Gifts may be sent to P.O. Box 6388, Asheville, NC 28816.