

October 27

Scriptures: Read 1 Samuel 17

Key Verse: “This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand,... that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.” (1 Samuel 17:46)

Overview

This famous story of David and Goliath tells of the first of many times that God used His newly anointed servant to bring about salvation for Israel. For one to be a king in Israel, it was required that he first be a servant of God. Because Saul had proven only to be self-serving, God could no longer use him. Since God’s Spirit had been taken from him, Saul, who was supposed to be Israel’s tall champion, had neither the strength nor the faith needed to courageously confront the Philistine giant (as did David); rather, he trembled with fear before him. Saul sat by and listened day after day to Goliath hurling insults against Israel and their God, but he did nothing. The first time David heard this, being zealous for God, he took action. When confronted face to face with Goliath’s fierceness and insults, his faith was not shaken. With the Spirit of the Lord upon him, David rightly believed he could overcome any odds against him.

It was in the providence of God that Jesse sent David on the 16 kilometer journey from Bethlehem to the Valley of Elah (about 20 kilometers southwest of Jerusalem) to take food to his older brothers. Although David’s older brother Eliab rebuked him, he persisted in speaking words of faith, even before Saul. David told of how the Lord had delivered him from the bear and the lion and, in like manner, would deliver him from the Philistine giant. God could not use Saul, but he could use a humble young shepherd who would give Him all the glory.

Goliath was a descendant of the Anakim, the race of giants that the children of Israel had so greatly feared. Joshua nearly exterminated them except for a remnant in Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod (Joshua 11:22). Goliath was around three meters in height (about nine feet, nine inches). The weight of his armour alone was probably about 68 kilograms (150 pounds), and his spear about nine kilograms (20 pounds).

Goliath’s challenge for one-on-one combat was not unusual. History shows that the ancient Greeks used this method. They, like the Philistines who likely came originally from Crete, believed the outcome would be decided by the gods. However, the outcome of this confrontation between David and Goliath had already been decided by the One and only true God. Considering the size of Goliath, it was no wonder that no Israelites would meet his challenge, for naturally speaking it was impossible. David, however, was not looking at the natural circumstances, for he had faith that with God’s supernatural help, Goliath would be easily defeated.

Since Goliath had the best possible weapons of their day, Saul tried at first to equip David in the same manner. David and Saul must have been of similar stature, for David did not refuse to wear Saul’s armour because of it being too big, rather because he was not accustomed to it. David also wanted everyone to know that “the Lord does not save with sword and spear,” referring to natural means, but “the battle is the Lord’s” (17:47), and since David approached Goliath “in the

name of the Lord of hosts” (17:45), the victory would be His. Therefore, though David was armed only with a primitive sling, he fearlessly ran out to meet the challenge victoriously.

The inspired writer of the book of Samuel did not write a chronological account of the events, rather they are recorded to show Israel’s salvation history. At this point, David was not yet Saul’s armourbearer (16:21), but he had occasionally played his harp for Saul in the royal court (16:23;17:15). Yet Saul asks, “Whose son is this youth?” (17:55). He is not asking who David is, for that he already knew, rather he is asking about David’s father. Saul had probably forgotten that when David had been first introduced to him, he had been told he was the son of Jesse (16:18). Perhaps he wanted this information so that the promised rewards for the victor, such as exemption for his father’s house (probably from taxation or mandatory service to the king, 17:25), could be officially granted to David’s household. Ironically, this was a blessing upon David which came from Saul.

Prayer

God of Israel, You are a God upon whom we can rely for help in time of need. We go forth into this day’s tasks with confidence that You fight for us and that we are winners! We humbly ask for Your strength to do Your will.