

# Goliath Tempts GOD's Giant !

## A Re-cap of Earlier Observations.

We took our leave of David (in 1 Sam.16:23) as he "took an harp, and played with his hand". As a result, "Saul was refreshed and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him". Surely the manifestation of such a supernatural gift would establish David forever in the service of Saul? Apparently not; for 1 Sam.17 opens with David absent from the field of battle ..... albeit that he (David) had earlier become Saul's armourbearer. (1 Sam.16:21). Why so? Where on earth has David gone at such a time as this? We have the answer in 1 Sam.17:15 ... "But David went and returned from Saul to feed his father's sheep at Bethlehem". Now this is astonishing - yet not at all surprising - for David was introduced to us in 1 Sam. 16:11 in these terms ..... "behold, he keepeth the sheep". David was, and is, and always shall be, "a keeper of sheep"! All other responsibilities undertaken by David will relate to, yea indeed centre upon, this! Here will be David's focus! Not upon the casting out of evil spirits, not upon fighting the Philistines, not even upon being made manifest as the Lord's anointed, but on keeping and feeding sheep.

It is significant that following upon a somewhat gentle, though nevertheless momentous, introduction to the manifestation of David in the affairs of Israel (and of Saul) that he is quickly thereafter projected into a scene of 'giant' proportions. David is about to come face-to-face with Goliath. Insofar as the biblical narrative is concerned David, having soothed Saul's troubled spirit, now feeding his father's sheep, is projected into the field of battle to confront the Giant of Israel's enemies. Let me take you to Mth.3:13-17. Here we have the 'gentle' manifestation of the Son of God signified by the descent of the Spirit of God 'like a dove'. But what follows thereupon? "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil ...".

## Goliath's Doctrine And Manner of Life

You would do well at this point to consider and reflect upon the 'substance' of Goliath as narrated in 1Sam.17:4-7. Here was a formidable enemy indeed. There was none other like him. "And the Philistine (Goliath) said, I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together". And this taunting of Israel by Goliath continued 40 days (1 Sam.17:16). Forty days Goliath waited for "a man" ("that we may fight together"), taunting whilst he waited. Now Jesus wilderness temptation at the outset of his public ministry is often carelessly comprehended. In the (lack of) understanding of many, Jesus is perceived to have been tempted only at the *conclusion* of 40 days with three devilish challenges (Mth.4:1-10; Mark 1:12&13; Luke 4:1-12). Yet this is not at all to be deduced from a clear reading of the narrative. Whilst Matthew's words, taken alone, might suggest the entrance, or presentation, of Satan only after 40 days of prayer and fasting yet Mark, and more particularly Luke, identifies the duration of the temptation itself as ... "Being forty days tempted of the devil". Thus it should be noted that whilst Jesus prayed and fasted 40 days, the devil presented himself time and time again (perhaps, but not necessarily, "morning and evening") (1Sam.17:16) the sole purpose being to tempt Jesus and to triumph in the temptation. The 40 days being now ended, however, Jesus "afterward hungered" (Lk.4:2d). Prayer and fasting now dissipates to confrontation and conflict on a scale heretofore not experienced by Jesus. A decisive battle is now to be fought between good and evil. Now this mighty force of evil must needs be engaged and defeated. Until now all the tempter's taunts had proved impotent in the face of Jesus' resolute defiance in the midst of prayer and fasting. Surrounded by "the wild beasts", none would now be more savage or merciless than the very same tempter who "now came to him" after the manner of the three concluding temptations which were to be presented to one who was weak after the flesh in his hungering. Weak after the flesh? ... yea verily! ... but strong in the Spirit and in the power thereof. Jesus would rise to the occasion and would put this spiritual Goliath to flight, thereby signifying beforehand (i.e. by a foretaste) the ultimate and universal triumph of good over evil. Such a battle may be glimpsed, in measure, here in the experience of David.

## A Great Dilemma and A Great Warning

Now this narrative is intended primarily to follow the fortunes of David and to this end I am to return, without further delay, to the things most surely believed among us as recorded in 1 Samuel 17. It is clear, is it not? ... from vs.11 that left to themselves, Saul and all Israel were already defeated before even a battle had taken place .... for no one would step forward and fight the Lord's battle; even that which required engaging Goliath of Gath? Now, easy though it may be to find fault with Saul and with all Israel in their reluctance to confront the Philistine Giant, the truth is that none then present were up to the challenge. What would'st thou have Saul and Israel to do? The challenge was to one (singular) man (1Sam.17:8f & 10c). This was not a case of 'trial and error' which would accommodate a second, third, and (if need be) multitudinous subsequent, attempts by romantic 'Bravehearts'. This was ONE proffered battle which would settle everything hereafter (1Sam.17:9) This is no time for romantic 'bravado'. This is a task for one who will be victorious on the behalf of Israel at the first venture - or not at all. Suffice then to say that this incident is not so much here recorded that we might scoff at the inability of Saul and of all Israel (there is rather an honesty, here reflected, in their unwillingness to 'rise' to a challenge which is altogether beyond them!) but rather that our souls may pause and wonder as to how such a challenge may indeed be answered, in the purpose of God, by one sufficiently fitted for such a task. "*Is there not a cause?*" (1Sam.17:29c). Of course there is! But is there a man, then present, who can answer to the enormity of such a cause? That is the real question. Until now the all-too-obvious answer is NO! There is no such man up to the enormity of such a task as this ... NO! Not even the choice king of Israel, Saul. But until such a time as this battle is fought and won, Israel is going nowhere and is in very deed already in bondage to one who would continue his taunting, even Goliath of Gath. Is there not a cause? Yes! Is there yet a man? No! Or rather – Not Yet! Israel was, therefore, without hope and apparently without God on this battlefield. Until, that is, such a time come as when it might be said that God hath provided himself a man. And that man was David; even a man after God's own heart. For God's heart was indeed with Israel at this time, as at others, and with the fortunes thereof. The challenge then is for one man to fight a once-and-for-all battle by which the future deliverance of Israel may be secured or forfeited forever.

Perhaps now you will understand why this is not a challenge to be met by enthusiasm alone. Nor is it a challenge to be seized upon by one who will view himself and his zeal in comparison to the weakness of others. Weakness on the part of Saul and of Israel? Yea verily! But only in comparison to the might of Goliath. Neither Saul nor Israel are intrinsically feeble but, individually, they are no match for Goliath. How refreshing it would be, even in our own day, if such as are called to fight GOD's battles would more readily acknowledge their own shortcomings and limitations rather than dare to wage war in their own strength. Such useless 'warriors' (as would wage war in their own strength!) but give Satan and his hosts opportunity upon opportunity for easy victories and occasions to discomfort and depress the true people of GOD. Try telling them this however! They will but point to your unwillingness to fight the LORD'S battles. They will accuse you of cowardice in the face of GOD'S enemies. They may even wax eloquent in their condemnation of others less foolish (or as they would insist, 'less brave') than themselves. And this generally is at the heart of the matter. They are in a fight. They are against Satan and his hosts (or so they believe and would have you believe!) but they are the rather reckless and irresponsible in the extreme. They are ready to "go to death and go to glory; go to immortality" .... as were the Policemen in "The Pirates of Penzance" ..... but at least those Policemen trembled as they went! Have you not met such an one as this? Indeed there are more than just one. But don't tell such an one that! He (they) will be most displeased and disagreeably inclined to hear on. All others are reputed as of nothing worth in their sight. No doubting their willingness to die for a cause and after all is said and done ... "is there not a cause"? Ask such an one who he relates to among the characters in "Pilgrims Progress". Does he identify with "Christian"? Well of course ... in some ways ... but ..... what about all those diversions from the true path? He would never deviate into such as Vanity Fair, By-Path Meadow, The Slough of Despond! God-forbid !!! He has arrived at the Celestial City before his time and is unique in his journey insofar as he has never been known to deviate one inch. Never! Never! Never!

## **David's Brethren**

We are now to revisit old ground somewhat in terms of 1 Sam. 17:12&13. Here again the three eldest sons of Jesse (Eliab, Abinadab and Shammah) are specifically named as those who "went and followed Saul to the battle". Now these same three are earlier also specifically named in terms of Samuel's prior visit to Jesse the Beth-lehemite (1 Sam. 16:6-9) and of whom it is recorded consecutively ... "I have refused him", ... "Neither hath the Lord chosen this", ... and "Neither hath the Lord chosen this". It is granted that the other un-named sons of Jesse had likewise been 'refused' or 'not chosen', yet is it not striking that the three sons of Jesse, now identified as following Saul to the battle, are highlighted by name on *both* occasions? What, if anything, are we to make of this? Here are three sons of Jesse who had witnessed the anointing of their youngest brother David by Samuel. They know assuredly (do they not ..... or do we suppose too much here?) that Saul has been rejected by the Lord. Yet they "followed Saul to the battle"! I do not want to make too much of this at present but might it be that these three brothers particularly doubted Samuel's wisdom in choosing and anointing their youngest brother David? Or might it just be that they are identified by name inasmuch as they are the most resentful of all the brothers for being passed over in favour of David? I am admittedly struggling here for a definitive conclusion but I am convinced that the naming of these three brothers on both occasions is spiritually significant; yet still I am reluctant to rule speculatively rather than spiritually and definitively.

We will have opportunity to look upon Eliab again shortly hereafter in the narrative (vs.28) and that which we will glean therefrom will then be certain and not at all speculative. And that is how theology ought to be presented! In keeping, therefore, with this desire for certainty in the interpretation of Scripture, I would encourage you to consider these things (concerning the two-fold naming of Eliab, Aminadab and Shammah) and the Lord give you understanding in all things.

## **David Reintroduced**

Further; is it not striking that in 1 Sam.17:12 David is, by the Holy Ghost, '*reintroduced*' to us *as if* as yet unknown? And not David only, but Jesse also and David's brethren? Now others in Scripture are suddenly projected onto the page thereof as if revealed out of nowhere e.g. Elijah and John Baptist - albeit John's prior conception and birth had earlier been revealed, where-after he is reintroduced with a witness. But in the case of those, and such as those, they are indeed being revealed for the very first time. If we were to commence our reading of Holy Scripture at this verse, we might assume likewise of David .... but this is clearly not the case! What shall we say to these things? Do we not here rather perceive an apparent anticlimax, followed by a fullness of revelation, regarding David, in the verses which follow thereupon? This is not altogether without prior principle. Do you not remember the glorious events associated with the coming of one that was born King of the Jews? The heavenly star! The glorious angelic chorus! And then? ... two years in the wilderness of Egypt! Thereafter?... a glimpse of Jesus as an infant receiving the solicitations of the wise men as they present to him their significant gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh, speaking of sovereignty, worship and suffering (for ough not Christ to suffer and enter into his glory?) Thereafter?... a glimpse of Jesus at the age of 12 attending unto his Father's business! Not until a further 18 years has elapsed are we '*reintroduced*' to David's greater Son, even Christ! And here in 1 Samuel 17 is David ... anointed King of the Jews earlier and that privately .... now '*reintroduced*' some time later to fight a great battle against one Goliath of Gath. I am acutely aware that I am not always able to do justice in revealing the full force of these recurring parallel passages which are 'scattered' throughout Holy Scripture. Indeed, "who is sufficient for these things?" But the spiritual will lay them to their heart.

## **The Heart of The Matter**

I return now to 1 Sam.17:14 to elaborate briefly upon what might be casually referred to by some as a simple display of 'sibling rivalry'. When all else fails of spiritual insight in such a setting some would talk in terms so simplistic and natural as to make one wonder where the complexities of providence are to be discovered in a story so meticulously set forth by inspiration of the Holy Ghost. "And David was the

youngest” (vs.14). Here is an apparent handicap on the part of David. Why should we favour or sympathise with the wisdom of youth when David’s three eldest brothers are in view? We have here a decisive parting of the ways. “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man”, and for David’s three eldest brothers that way was to follow in the footsteps of Saul. David, on the other hand, chose the better part ... as he “went and returned from Saul to feed his father’s sheep at Bethlehem”(vs.15). Tell me, all ye that love the Lord, whether younger or older, where would you rather be; what would you rather be doing? At Bethlehem or on the battlefield? Feeding your father’s sheep or preparing to fight? Now; I am old enough and not without a measure of experience in both feeding and fighting. Feeding is better! Here is something that is eternal. Fighting, on the other hand, is but temporal. Yet, indeed, there is a time for war.

### A Contemporary Application

Now regarding youth and eldership, even in terms of the natural realm, there is significance. Generally speaking, the accrued natural wisdom of years is to be esteemed. But when it comes to service for God, it is the anointing that is all important. Note that I refer to service for God rather than the contemporary obsession with multitudinous concepts of ‘leadership’. If ever one, apart from Christ, was to lead his people Israel, it was David. Yet he is continually presented to us in scripture in terms of service. Yes, of course he was a leader *par excellence* but David’s leadership qualities were perfected in the *service* of God. *He learned to lead by learning to follow*, as it is written elsewhere ... “Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet’s son; but I was an herdman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit: And the LORD took me **as I followed the flock**” (Amos 7:14&15). Here is a hard saying in the day in which we live. Seekest thou great things for thyself in terms of leadership? Seek them not! In serving thou shalt serve and God will determine the response of others to such singular and self-sacrificing service. But many today will not receive such an exhortation. They are self-evidently leadership material and a multitude of colleges and systems are already in place to receive, and indeed fast-track, such obvious enthusiastic and determined individuals into positions of prominence within self-perpetuating man-centred ecclesiastical courts offering carnally minded theological accreditation. These would-be ‘commanders’ in the army of God will be transported (but never transfigured) upon well-oiled theological conveyor belts through man-made theological cloisters and courses which will, in due time, multiply man-made certificates conveying man’s recognition and authority on all who will so readily travel ... but how many passing this way will speak as those having God’s anointing and God’s authority and not as latter day scribes? Not many ... if at all any today! But what is that to them? Having been trained of men, the assent of their mentors is all that matters and is proof sufficient to a waiting and gullible ‘church’ that there are yet theological giants in the land today. But the spiritual knoweth them not and, like Mordecai with Haman, will ‘bow not, nor do them reverence’. And this will in due course infuriate such as their latent carnal wrath gains opportunity to rail against such as will not recognise their manifest worth. The story is told of one who had refused the theological systems of men and had chosen rather to have been taught of God. When challenged by one of these college clones as to where he had gained his knowledge of God and his Gospel, he responded by saying that he had studied his theology at St. Mary’s College. When asked where this collage was located he replied simply ... “at the Master’s feet”! Now I am not here advocating a free-enterprise approach to theological training but is not that what is produced under a model which allows every budding Charles (Spurgeon), Tom, Dick and Harry to choose whether to opt for a Presbyterian, Baptist, Pentecostal, Charismatic, Bible Pattern, Brethren, etc. etc. etc. training programme? But what is that to them? They are in the system and all else are but troublesome and envious ‘Independents’ and ‘Sectarians’. “No man is an island!” is their cry as they seek to dismiss those who will not submit nor conform to the assumed authority of their own man-made and man-centred establishments. I think it was William Huntington who used to infuriate some of the theological establishment of his day - including not a few prominent evangelicals - by having the letters SS inscribed on a horse-drawn carriage gifted to him to facilitate his evangelistic endeavours. “He is being pretentious!” alleged some who should have known better. “How knoweth this man letters, never having learned” (in their colleges presumably)! And what did the letters SS stand for? “SINNER SAVED”. Perhaps Huntington was being a little mischievous in so publicly presenting his “qualifications” (I cannot tell) but who will fault him for glorying in **Grace** whilst exonerating his detractors, most of whom loved to appear in clerical dress and assimilate to themselves highfalutin titles affirming in no uncertain manner that they - and they alone presumably - were the people worthy of all

acceptation, recognition and respect as ‘the Clergy’ and without whom wisdom would no doubt die. Such, more often than not, spoke as those having ‘official’ authority and not as the prophets!

### **David’s Sending**

The narrative of 1 Sam.17 proceeds to inform us that the Philistine giant is a tempter indeed. Day after day he relentlessly taunts the army of Saul. Indeed he ‘‘drew near morning and evening’’ in the fullness of his might for all of forty days teasing and taunting Saul and his army. And they answered him not a word apparently. Shortly we will see something of the fear engendered by the presence of this giant of the Philistines but for now a battle is raging ‘‘in the valley of Elah’’ (vs.19). And in anticipation of this battle God is preparing his little giant to answer to the real need of the hour, even the defeat of the great giant of the Philistines; and that so in a most unusual manner. It is Jesse, David’s father, ‘‘an old man in the days of Saul’’ (vs.12d) who’s heart is moved to send his youngest son David with provisions for his brethren. ‘‘Take now for thy brethren an ephah of this parched corn, and these ten loaves, and run to the camp to thy brethren. And carry these ten cheeses unto the captain of their thousand, and look how thy brethren fare, and take their pledge’’(vs. 17b-18). Note first that David’s introduction to the battlefield will not be as a warrior, skilled or unskilled, but as a *servant* to his brethren. He will leave off feeding his father’s sheep, but only in order to feed his father’s three eldest sons (his own elder brethren) ... and his wider brethren also! ‘‘But with only ‘‘an ephah of ... corn .....and ten loaves’’ ..... what are they among so many? And David will not leave his father’s sheep unattended and unprotected in the interim. He will leave ‘‘the sheep with a keeper’’ (vs.20b). David’s care of the sheep is inextricably linked with all that he will plan and all that he will accomplish under the anointing of God. It is perhaps early days to introduce the thought, but do you remember when Nathan the prophet challenged David regarding his sin with Bathsheeba? He refers to a rich man and a poor man! The rich man ‘had exceeding many flocks and herds: *But the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb*’’ (2 Sam.12:1&2). How this prophetic analogy must have torn David’s soul asunder as a shepherd who cared exceedingly for each and every individual sheep and lamb of his own flock.

Tell me! how many young men seeking positions of leadership in the church today are characterised pre-eminently by a zeal to feed and to protect the sheep of God’s pasture? ‘‘I want to be a preacher! I want to be a Youth Leader! I want to be a Worship Leader (whatever that is supposed to mean)! I want to work with children! I want ... I want ... I want ...’’. But who wants simply to be identified with the sheep, and to feed the sheep, and to protect the sheep, and to spend and be spent for the sheep ... and, if necessary, to lay down his life for the sheep? Here are the signs to look for if one is to be identified as being fashioned for *service* and honed for a *glorious ministry*.

Now vs.20 speaks of the anointed David even now as one under authority; even that of his aged father. He ‘‘took and went, as Jesse had commanded him’’. And notice how he humbled himself ... ‘‘and he came to the *trench*, as the host was going forth to the battle.’’ He, as it were, hid himself as others revealed themselves in the going forth from the trench to the battle. He was decreasing visibly as others were increasing visibly. But to what battle and to what end were the others going forth? To a battle that would settle nothing! For ‘the elephant in the room’ was a giant of the Philistines in the field who had repeatedly declared that victory or defeat for Israel would hinge upon a battle not of armies but of two men in one-to-one combat (vs.8-10). Now ‘‘When Saul and all Israel heard those words of the Philistine, they were dismayed, and greatly afraid’’(vs.11). Now ‘‘fear hath torments’’ and Saul and Israel were both fearful and tormented day and night as a result. Never underestimate the need to address current spiritual issues of eternal significance as a matter of urgency. The alternative is but to mark-time by continuing to battle in nearby fields and deeper valleys, all the while putting off till ‘tomorrow’ (and tomorrow, and the next day) that which must needs be addressed today. For ‘‘*now* is the accepted time; *now* is the day of salvation’’.

### **David’s Empathy**

Now David’s heart was with his brethren in the battle (vs.20g). Of course it was! This was Israel and these were David’s brethren. His vocal support in the trench was not at all surprising. Nor was his speedy

translation to the battlefield thereafter as he realised that the die was cast insofar as the intensity of the battle seemed to speak of finality and destiny. His brethren are on the battlefield and he cares for their safety and wellbeing - for so had he been charged (vs.18). Once again (vs.22) we note the meticulous nature of David's care for that for which he had the responsibility to administer viz. 'his carriage'. David may be passionate indeed, even at this young age, but he is neither irresponsible nor rash and he hands over the provisions given to him by his father, for his brethren, into the temporary care of the keeper thereof (vs.22). I say 'temporary' care as that is surely the apparent and original intent. But we read no more of these provisions. Why so? However much David is caught up in the moment of battle, he will have at the forefront of his mind and in the centre of his heart that which was committed to him by his father to accomplish viz. 'the distribution of gifts'. But as predestination and providence would have it, David would first be called upon 'to lead captivity captive before giving gifts unto men' (Eph.4:8), even unto his brethren.

### **Procrastination – The Thief of Time**

Now at this point it should not be forgotten, but remembered, that David is oblivious to the ultimate challenge now facing Israel in the person of the Philistine giant. The battle may rage, 'army against army' (vs.21), but until the said Philistine giant viz. Goliath is engaged and conquered, nothing whatsoever can be accomplished long-term on the part of Israel. They can, at best, hope to mark time whilst going nowhere. Do you ever consider this to be the pattern of your own spiritual life and pilgrimage? Getting nowhere fast; but slowly is an improvement on marking time and getting nowhere at all. Many professing Christ's name today are going 'nowhere' and the tragedy is that they know it not, and this abject ignorance is aided and abetted by 'preachers' who are heading in the same direction i.e. nowhere at all! But such 'preachers' need company to survive. They require an audience (not a congregation) just like the stand-up comedians of the entertainment world. But they neither entertain nor edify! And they are certainly not funny in the grand spiritual scheme of things eternal. But many having gained audiences of like-minded (or empty-headed) individuals 'flourish' collectively and presume to have established New Testament churches and ministries. But where is the meaningful spiritual impact thereof upon the local community; upon the wider echelons of society; even upon the nation state? Such a question is more often than not met with a derisory and dismissive retort to the effect that they are 'doing a great work' and will not hear any criticism from one who has not built anything answering to what they have built. But have they not read ... '*I will build my church* (saith Christ) and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it' (Mth.16:18)?

### **A Timely 'Coincidental' Reappearance of Goliath**

Now David, concerned for his brethren's safety, speaks peace unto them by salutation (vs.22). And this is David's sincere desire for them viz. that they might know "the peace of God which passeth all understanding", even whilst on the battlefield and in the midst of battle where war is raging. This is the heart of David as revealed in his words to his brethren. And his brethren responded (vs.23a); but as to the manner of their response we are told nothing initially. Yet we may deduce from what follows shortly hereafter (vs.28) that feelings of peace were not reciprocated; at least not in the heart of Eliab, David's eldest brother. It is at this point, providentially, that "the champion" Goliath appears on the scene in the seeing and hearing of David for the very first time and on this occasion Goliath "spake according to the same words" as heretofore (vs.8-10). Earlier (1Sam.17:4-10) Goliath's stature and appearance is described in great detail and he is therein viewed in all his power and might as he challenges Israel to a decisive one-to-one battle which will end all battles. Now, vs.10 makes it clear, in no uncertain terms, that Goliath is utterly confident that he will win such a battle. No inferiority complex here on the part of Goliath; and why should there be? "All the men of Israel, when they saw the man (Goliath), fled from him, and were sore afraid". Would you have stepped forward to confront such an one as this? I think not; but you may suppose better things of yourself. So what makes the difference in vs.23&24 when Goliath but repeats himself yet again *ad nauseum*? Well vs.24 indicates that attention had shifted significantly on the part of Israel to Goliath's **appearance** ... "when they *saw* the man, (they) fled from him, (i.e. from his face) and were sore afraid". Earlier (vs.11) "When Saul and all Israel *heard those words* of the Philistine, they were dismayed, and greatly afraid". The difference this time (vs.23) is that, for the first time, **David is hearing** what is being

said by Goliath. Now it is apparent that David both *sees and hears* Goliath ..... (vs.23) “And as he (David) talked with them (his brethren), **behold** .....”; yet it is David’s ‘providential’ **hearing** of Goliath that is here in view particularly; not just his seeing. Why so? Because ‘**hearing**’ has priority over ‘**seeing**’ in the determination of the will of God. **Faith**, you will remember, “cometh by **hearing**” (Rom.10:17) “and *hearing* by the word of God”. Now it is accepted immediately that hearing all the words of Goliath is not intrinsically synonymous with hearing the word of God. But insofar as the words of Goliath, herein recorded, are uttered providentially and are now enshrined within the “Word of God” - even the “Canon of Scripture” - David was therefore **moved in his hearing** by words now constituting ... “The Word of God” ... even “Holy Scripture”! It is admitted that David is also *moved* by other factors, as we shall see, but this takes nothing away from David’s careful *walk of faith* until now, and subsequent *fight of faith* with Goliath.

### **Be Not Afraid Of Their Faces!**

Now vs.24 indicates yet again that Goliath had an intimidating face. “And all the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him (i.e. from his face), and were sore afraid”. By the way; do not underestimate the intense fear which can be communicated by men’s faces. Do you not remember God’s injunction to Jeremiah (Jer.1:8) ... “Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD”. Now notice this ..... when it comes to fearful faces in the experience of Jeremiah, the LORD said “I am with thee to deliver thee”. Jeremiah was to fear not, not because his middle name was ‘Braveheart’ or ‘Valiant for Truth’ or ‘the LORD’S Champion’, but rather that the LORD would *deliver him* from ‘fearful faces’. Jeremiah will then have need of humility in such circumstances and company, not arrogance and self-esteem! When Jeremiah is weak, as he will be in such circumstances, then will he *be strong in the LORD and in the power of his might*. Vs 25 (1 Sam.17) is at least a frank and honest expression of astonishment on the part of those who now speak. Yet what has changed from Goliath’s earlier appearance as recorded in vs. 4–11? The men of Israel who witness this incident have gone, as it were, from being “dismayed, and greatly afraid”(vs.11) to being “sore afraid”(vs.24). Now *dismay and great fear* is one thing, but ‘*sore afraid*’ is altogether another. With the former the men of Israel are able, or at least permitted, to stand their ground, whereas with the latter they are caused to flee. What has happened to make the difference? Well, in vs.8 Goliath says “choose you a man for you, and let him come **down** to me”, whilst in vs.23 Goliath, it would seem, draws now nearer to the men of Israel by “(coming) **up** ..... out of the armies of the Philistines”. The earlier incident had aroused reasonable fears in the men of Israel from a distance but now that battle, which must needs be fought, (as described in vs.9) has drawn ever so near as each day has passed and now, particularly, as this day has dawned. That initial fear had intensified as the day of reckoning had drawn closer and closer and now the immanence of the battle - and the nearness of the Giant who would precipitate the battle - had caused (all) the men of Israel to be “sore afraid”. Here is overwhelming fear. Now this reappearance of Goliath may seem to the casual reader of Scripture to be but repetitively coincidental; but not to those who are spiritual. Here is an act of providential expediency which is timed meticulously to correspond with the predestined moment of opportunity viz. in the hearing of David ... “and David heard *them*”(vs.23) i.e. David heard the words of Goliath. A not insubstantial reward is exposted to all by the men of Israel (speaking, as it would appear, on the behalf of the king viz. Saul) to “the (man) who killeth (Goliath)”. “... the king will enrich him with great riches, and will give him his daughter, and make his father’s house free in Israel”. Here is now a clear understanding by the men of Israel that the battle against Goliath will have to be fought by **one** man alone.

### **David’s Verbal Response To A Just Cause**

Now the earlier words of 1Sam17:26 may suggest to some that David is impressed, astonished, perhaps even motivated, by the immense magnitude of such a proffered reward. But I am persuaded better things of David. Impressed? ... perhaps! Astonished? ... yes! But no more so than he was **puzzled and perplexed!** Motivated by such a reward? ... **not for one moment!** David’s appreciation of Israel’s adversary, Goliath, is derisory in the extreme. Not insofar as Goliath’s prowess in battle or his social stature and standing is concerned but in that “this uncircumcised Philistine ... should defy the armies of the living God”. David is contemptuous of Goliath in the context of the ‘big picture’ i.e. the eternal purpose(s) of

God! David's affections are set on things which are above. He will not pander to the reputation, however great, of one who has set himself in opposition to the "armies of the living God". Now note this with a witness ... David speaks not here of the people of God, or of the children of God, or of Israel the son of God, but of the "armies of the living God". What might we conclude from this? Surely *inter alia* that David, having been introduced into the very heart and heat of the battle does not decide, nor does it even enter into his head, to resort to diplomatic means in order to forge a more amicable way forward to all concerned *viz* friends and foes alike. An amicable arrangement? With an uncircumcised Philistine? For David, the die was cast, and had been so cast long before his coming. He would address issues as he found them, not seek to rewrite history or renegotiate the terms of engagement which had been long since established. Would to God that today's worldly Goliath's were publicly 'appreciated with such derision' by those Christians who have opportunity to engage with them in whatever technological or social sphere. Those in academia who would "defy the armies of the living God" through their uncircumcised atheistic intellect; or those in Government who would seek to intimidate the people of God into acceptance of the 'democratic will of the people' (so called) as they foist a dictatorially unrighteous agenda upon the masses for the greater good of themselves.

If one today is constrained, by whatever influences, to stoop to the level of 'tweets' and 'blogs' then let him declare, in no uncertain terms, his utter contempt for those and such as those who would continue to "defy the armies of the living God" even today. I tell you plainly ... if you have been afforded the opportunity to stand face to face with one or more of God's defiant adversaries by engaging them in the battle of debate, you have no time - nor should you have the inclination - to seek to identify or convey any measure whatsoever of 'common ground' betwixt you and them in an attempt to convey or suggest a proffered dignity of engagement. Have ye not read ..... "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed"? "Enmity" note! Not 'dignity'! Not 'courtesy'! Not even 'common decency', whatever such a phrase is supposed to imply in a spiritual context! It troubles me from time to time to read of evangelicals who have opportunity to engage with such prominent atheistic protagonists and who thereafter appear to wear the mere fact of engagement as a 'badge of honour' irrespective of the outcome of their deliberations. They have debated with Mr Valiant for Atheism and found him congenial and highly intelligent. Misguided perhaps? Of course! But they "must give credit where credit is due". It would be unchristian of them to do otherwise, would it not? No! No! No! Calvin said "even a dog will bark when his master is attacked" and if the said analogy is logically extrapolated, then surely 'barking' with no intention of subsequent engagement other than the commencement of hostilities. Certainly not of mutual admiration and reciprocal appreciation!

Do you hear what David is in fact saying here in vs.26? Having heard the offer of great things for "the man that killeth this Philistine" he can contain himself no longer ... "for who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God". Do you see David here; yea rather do you hear David in his speaking? It is not that David is seeking clarification of the reward offered, else he would have paused before asking ... "for who is this uncircumcised Philistine". His focus is not at all upon any such reward, however great, but rather is he moved by his incredulity as to why such credibility is being attributed to one, however awesome in the flesh, who is - after all is said and done - of nothing worth in comparison to the "armies of the living God" who are against him. If I may be so bold as to attribute 'unbelief' to David it is in the context of suggesting that he just cannot believe, in his astonishment, that such honour, or weight, or credibility (as it were), is being given to a Philistine, be he ever so Giant.

### **The Carnal Appreciation Of A Just Cause By The Men Of Israel**

Now vs.27 is disappointing is it not? Rather that perceive the heart of David, as outlined in the previous paragraph, those who responded would only answer him after the flesh i.e. they would answer his question in part. They would go as far as they could here go with David ... and no further! They would reiterate what was earlier spoken in terms of 'reward' (in vs.25) but as to understanding, or empathising with him in his spiritual contempt for Goliath to the point of disgust they would, or rather could, not! Not that they did not hear David's question as to who "this uncircumcised Philistine" was, but that in hearing they presumably realised, however subconsciously, that to respond verbally to this part of David's *exhortation*



(for this was no question really but rather an exhortation!) would demand an honest, literal response in terms of confronting the Giant who stood before them head (or face) on. And they were not able so to do. Have we not all been there in some measure, brethren? Faced with an insurmountable problem we have sought to analyse, or rationalise, or even discuss the best possible outcome which might ensue if we could only work out a *compromise* solution. Of course, we would never call it a *compromise*. It would be a *concensus*, or a *conciliation*, and it would be so for the simple reason that we were not prepared - for whatever reason - to meet the problem head-on! As long as we put off the inevitable as long as we can! As long as we send it down to presbytery for consultation! As long as we can encourage others to dither as we are wont to dither! Better not to start from here! We could call a 'moratorium' to let the dust settle and start from there. But how can the *dust settle* on a battlefield? "Always look on the bright side of life" as it were. But this is not just a matter of life! It is a matter of both **life** and **death**! And our way of dealing with such a matter is often one of self-deception through silence or expediency; and we are all too prone to responding thus.

I digress (but not too far) for a moment to urge the reader to consider afresh the battle which is drawing relentlessly closer to each and every one of us as the days pass. It is that battle with the first Death which we are all locked into, and which none of us will escape (or win); save those of God's people who are alive at Christ's coming. How apprehensive are you about engaging in that battle? How seriously do you view the reality of that battle - whatever your age? How fearful are you of being defeated in that battle - for defeated, in a very real sense, you will be! It is no use looking to another to fight that battle on your behalf. Are you ready to die the first death? Are you ready to die (even) the death of the righteous? Are you ready to die like Simeon? (Tell me I pray thee; where is he ever referred to in Scripture as '*old* Simeon'?) For many years now I have considered contemporary preaching to be altogether lacking in this one thing that is needful viz. words spoken in the ministry, in the power of the Spirit, which will equip the Christian to fight the good fight of faith ... **even unto death**! The ministry of the New Covenant must needs lead us **even unto death** ... as it did Christ. Now, is not this strange? Was it not the Old Covenant which demanded death? Does not the New Covenant usher in life eternal? Yea verily on both counts! Yet, for Christ, both Covenants were embraced in their totality in and by Him ..... and that on the behalf of His people. That (Old) covenant that speaks death, even to the Christian, has now been satisfied in and by Christ on the behalf of His people. That (New) covenant that speaks life has been ratified in and by Christ on the behalf of His people; **albeit through death**! Not only would Christ "save his people from their sins", He would also "magnify the law and make it honourable". Yet still, for the vast majority of Christians throughout history, the ignominy of physical death has engulfed, or yet will engulf, them.

Now; of course it is written ... "O death, where is thy sting; O grave where is thy victory"(1Cor.15:55) but, as the previous verse establishes without a peradventure, the fulfilment thereof awaits the day when "Death is swallowed up in victory" i.e. at the resurrection of the just "when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality"(1Cor.15:54 a&b.)

### **Eliab Shamefully Reintroduced**

I refer the reader now to 1Sam.17:28 wherein we are re-introduced to Eliab, David's "eldest brother". I have already hinted at the significance of Eliab. Now we shall see something of the development of that significance. Eliab was obviously within earshot of his youngest brother David at this particular moment - and indeed for a few moments at least as he listened in to current communications between David and the said men of Israel. Yet nothing is recorded which would indicate that Eliab welcomed his brother David to the scene. One might at least have expected a display of astonishment, or curiosity, or concern, on the part of Eliab to have burst forth in the seeing or hearing of his youngest brother who had drawn near to the battlefield *at such a time as this*. But all we can glean from the narrative is that (David) "talked with them" (vs.23a) i.e. "his brethren" following upon his salutation wherein he had enquired of their peace. Now nothing whatsoever is recorded of what was said, if indeed anything, by David's brethren in response to his concern for them. Rather are we soon introduced to the intensity of contempt and strife which Eliab had obviously nurtured in his heart toward his youngest brother. Note the wording ..... "Eliab's anger was kindled against David"(1 Sam.17b). Here are expressive words indeed. It was not that Eliab had considered the words that David had just uttered in his hearing regarding Goliath and was reacting rationally to them.

This was nothing other than an outburst of sheer contempt on the part of Eliab to the very presence of David. Here was 'a fire being kindled' - and a fire already well stacked and prepared for kindling .... but in the case of Eliab, for *fire* read *anger*.

Now Eliab's first words to his youngest brother David are these ... "Why camest thou down hither?" Yet such a question is rhetorical, is it not, insofar as Eliab proceeds to accuse David of "(coming) down .. (to) .. see the battle"? Eliab was not questioning but accusing David. But there is even more to Eliab's question than is initially obvious. Notice how he adds ... "and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness?" Eliab's speech here betrayeth him. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh and Eliab is here seen to be contemptuous of David's meticulous care, even of a "few sheep in the wilderness". Indeed he knows even now that David will have made provision for the care of these sheep, be they ever so few. Eliab knows that David had been entrusted by his father with the care of sheep in the wilderness but is, apparently, altogether unimpressed by David's commission in this regard. Yet similarly apparent is the fact that Eliab views David as altogether unfit to fight the Lord's battles! There is just no pleasing some people! I would turn your attention again to my introduction to this Chapter wherein I said this ..... "*But David went and returned from Saul to feed his father's sheep at Bethlehem*". Now this is *astonishing* - yet not at all surprising - for David was introduced to us in 1 Sam. 16:11 in these terms ..... "*behold, he keepeth the sheep*". David was, and is, and always shall be, "*a keeper of sheep*"! All other responsibilities undertaken by David will relate to, yea indeed centre upon, this! Here will be David's focus! Not upon the casting out of evil spirits, not upon fighting the Philistines, not even upon being made manifest as the Lord's anointed, but on keeping and feeding sheep." Here is something that the carnal cannot grasp. Yet this *typical* description of David's commission is yet another wonderful insight into the very heart of God which David even "panteth after" (Psalm 42:1). Is there not an echo here (in 1 Sam. 17) of that which is written in John 17:12 viz. "While I was with them ... I kept them: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost ..."? And now, called by his father to go away and to leave the said sheep behind, *David will not leave them comfortless*. "And David ..... left the sheep with a **keeper**" (1 Sam. 17:20b). Eliab knew his youngest brother only too well.

### Established Principles

Now if the principles herein enunciated are spiritual principles, the traits of personal character contained herein might reasonably be expected to repeat themselves more often than not. And to the establishment of this conclusion I would call to witness the earlier Chapters of Genesis to speak in the **defence** of David and for the **prosecution** of Eliab. We turn, therefore, our attention to Genesis 37 and to the experience of a young man called **Joseph**. Now in vs.2 we read that "Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock *with* his brethren". Not long thereafter (vs.13&14) we read of Joseph being directed by his father to the place appointed to the brethren, by their father, where *they* were to *feed the sheep*. And what found Joseph there? Nothing whatsoever answering to the father's commandment! And nothing has changed, even today, as those so sent of their heavenly father go forth into the fields to discover those, and such as those, "who will feed the flock in Schechem" (vs.13b).

Indeed the very experience of seeking out such will (if I may say it reverently) 'disorientate' even Joseph. Yet, in his *disorientation* will be discerned a **seeking** that is **significant**. It is not so that Joseph is here lost, but that his understanding of 'obedient service' has been dealt a severe blow and, as a result, Joseph is struggling insofar as the way forward is concerned. And this should come as no surprise to the spiritual, for Joseph will not go forward on a whim or on a peradventure. And, in the absence of a direct word from his father, Joseph will persevere even in his *apparent* wandering i.e. in his **seeking**; even until providence shall provide a way of escape ... for to whom (else) shall Joseph go? Do you see it? Do you perceive it? Joseph will rather *wander* "in the field" (vs.15) if that should be his father's will, and in accord with his father's commission; for such an one is *under authority*. Do not forget this .... Joseph is looking for his brethren! Then they also will be as those under authority, will they not? That is surely how it should be; but sadly the reality is far different. Tell me! Do you sympathise with such an one as Joseph in such circumstances? Of course you do! It is clear from scripture (is it not?) that Joseph, though very much alone, is also very much loved and is fulfilling his father's will - even though he finds himself *all alone in a field*

*which has no flock.* You will sympathise, therefore, with Joseph given that scripture points you in that direction. But how will you fare in a contemporary situation answering thereto?

Have you ever encountered such an one as this who has found himself, spiritually speaking, all alone in a field, having no flock of his own, but seeking the location of likeminded brethren yet, all this time, pursuing the wellbeing of his father's flock? Never? Then you have missed out on an opportunity to observe someone well worth getting to know! As I perceive matters, even today, many there are who claim, oft times ever so assuredly, to have been entrusted with the care of their father's flock and yet have no spiritual understanding as to what is required of them. Despite claims to the contrary (I almost said 'protestations' but that would be far too controversial a word to attribute to them) most are, at best, both superficial and shallow. Some are downright sinister - as were Joseph's brethren. And what is more, they are surviving admirably in Dothan. What need have they of Joseph? None whatsoever!

I have, perhaps, digressed more than initially intended into the life of Joseph and the recording of a more detailed insight into such a vast depth of spiritual experience as was Joseph's must await another day - at least on my part. To return to the initial intention of my digression, however, I would but refer the reader to the words of Gen.37:18-20. They are ever so expressive and I would be remiss if I failed to quote them viz. *'And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him. And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh. Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams.'* Do you see with what depth of hatred Joseph's brethren hated him? While Joseph *'dreamed in his dreams'*, his brethren *'hated in their hatred'*. And that so without a cause! You may have read, however, some *'evangelical'* from *Dothan* attributing Joseph's brethren's hatred of him (at least in some measure) to Joseph's own supposed arrogant boasting in relation to his dreams. Such, presumably, 'not knowing what to say said ...' but should rather have 'held his peace'.

### **A Root Of Bitterness**

Now; do you see the parallels? Joseph's brethren despised him; even when "afar off." *'Out of sight, out of mind'* say some; but not Joseph's brethren. And in 1Sam.17 Eliab despised David; even from a distance. And now, face to face, Eliab cannot refrain from expressing his contempt for David and his *little flock* i.e. "those few sheep"(1Sam.17:28e). Yet both David and Joseph *must be about their father's business*; irrespective of the estimation or response of their elder brethren. And if, like David, such have to leave off one task to attend to another, provision will be made for an administration which will ensure the security of the first charge as it is written (David) "left the sheep with a keeper"(vs.20b). Nothing will be left at risk or to chance insofar as David's care for the sheep is concerned. Even Eliab has to acknowledge this viz. "and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness?"(vs.28e). Eliab is, however reluctantly, constrained to admit, though certainly not to admire, his youngest brother's diligence in caring even for a few sheep - and that "in the wilderness" (vs.28e). Such is the intensity of Eliab's resentment toward David that he must needs express himself in the most derisory manner. He can see no good thing in David. As far as he is concerned, David had been marginalised 'in the wilderness' and that is how it should be. Why has such an one come forth therefrom at such a time as this? Surely there can be no honourable reason attributable to David in such circumstances? Of course not! David, according to Eliab, has "come down that thou mightest see the battle" (vs.28h). And according to Eliab this course of action has been occasioned by David's "pride and naughtiness of ..... heart". Eliab, having no real spiritual knowledge (or discernment) of what to say, said ..... and his speech betrays him. He cannot (or will not) speak peaceably of, or to, his youngest brother David. A root of bitterness, having sprung up in the heart of Eliab, has now surfaced and will out!

David's response (vs.29) to such an expression of animosity is altogether revealing. "What have I now done?" he asks. Is not this less of a question and more of a sigh on David's part? Eliab had earlier referred derisively to David's stay, until now, in the wilderness, yet still he manages to find fault with David's appearance on the battlefield. There is no pleasing some people. If David is absent from the battlefield he is to be deprecatingly despised. If David is present on the battlefield he is to be dismissively

disrespected. It is clear, is it not, that sin lies at Eliab's door in this instance? This conflict of interests has more to say of Eliab's heart than it has of David's – a man after God's own heart.

### A Glimmer of Hope

Now vs.30 is revealing, is it not? David's astonishment is genuine. He looks around him, not that he may appeal to an audience but that he might, peradventure, find but one man likeminded. And he fixes his eyes upon one who perhaps looks as if he might just understand that which David perceives to be ever so obvious i.e. that there is indeed a cause .....! ('And he turned from him toward *another* and spake after the same manner'.) Surely there must be one man, at the very least, in the immediate company who would feel as David felt? Surely David's overt and spiritually unselfish sincerity would be plain for all to see? No? Then for at least one to see? Surely? Yet the reality is that David "has no man likeminded" on this battlefield and those around him will but observe him curiously, hear him hesitantly, fathom him carnally, and ultimately (at best) but represent him repetitively before Saul. As is so often the case, the over-riding influence of such an one as Eliab has in many ways prevailed by default for ... "the people answered him (David) again after the former manner". The people may not have taken on board the substance of Eliab's intensely passionate, though spiteful, diatribe against David, yet, being themselves altogether unable to discern David's heart, and not knowing what else to say, but answered him according to their earlier answer. They were still no further forward in their understanding of David.

Yet there is a glimmer of hope here insofar as the *repetition* of David's words (vs.31a&b) had undoubtedly reverberated in the ears of those who, having heard, would thereafter "*rehearse(d)* them before Saul". Those words which at the first had aroused a latent contemptuous response in the heart, and thereafter from the mouth, of Eliab, had obviously lingered powerfully in the company "of the men who stood by him (i.e. David) ..... and another" (vs.26a & 30a) - however imperceptibly so at the first - even unto the salvation of Israel. Here is a significant characteristic of the true and authentic preaching of the Word of God. It has a lasting influence on the hearers thereof ... and it has even longer lasting repercussions on succeeding events. True preaching always solicits a response from those who hear it ("My word will not return unto me void") ... and calls for *repentance* i.e. *a change of mind*. In the context of 1 Sam.17:1-31, David's *preaching* to others leads to Saul sending for David (vs.31) and even thereafter to a subsequent *change of mind* on Saul's part respecting his initial unwillingness to approve of David going forth to battle against the Philistine Giant. *The immediate hearing of God's Word must be our priority*. The repetitive hearing thereof after the manner herein described will be attended to appropriately by the Spirit of God Himself. "And we are his witnesses of these things, and so is also the Holy Ghost". (Acts 5:32) Such preaching, proclaiming, declaring, forth-telling, is indeed dynamic! It is "the power (dynamite) of God unto salvation"(Rom.1:16b).

Whilst previewing here, in conclusion meantime, the subsequent positive response to David's words, it must needs be acknowledged that authentic, spiritual calls to repentance often fall upon deaf ears. This should come as no surprise as even the Everlasting Gospel, in all its fullness, is proclaimed altogether effectively to those who are *dead* in trespasses and in sins. But there are indeed some, yea many, who "hearing (ye) shall hear, and not understand" – **ever!** (Mth.13:14) To such the Gospel is "a savour of death unto death"..... "Why was I made to hear Thy voice, And enter while there's room; When thousands make a wretched choice, And rather starve than come? 'Twas the same love that spread the feast, That sweetly drew us in; Else we had still refused to taste, And perished in our sin"..... (Isaac Watts). Elsewhere we read "**But God, who is rich in mercy ....**". We shall see shortly that in this instance, as was so often demonstrated in the history of Israel, God was manifestly merciful in His great love wherewith he loved Israel in here sending a 'saviour' to deliver them, even David ... a man after His own heart!

W. M. Black. (to be continued).