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BIBLE LESSONS. STUDIES IN JEWISH HISTORY.

Third Quarter. Lesson IX, Sept. 1. 1 Samuel 17: 32-51. DAVID AND GOLIATH.

GOLDEN TEXT. "If God be for us, who can be against us?"—Rom. 8: 31.

EXPLANATORY. I. THE CIRCUMSTANCES. We are told "there was a war against the Philistines all the days of Saul" (14: 52); and the whole nation of Israel was in Israel justified for supposing that Saul's crowning act of disobedience was followed by a fresh assault of these enemies. The mode of warfare pursued by them was of the guerrilla description. They made a series of sudden raids on unprotected places for purposes of plunder. In this case Saul had met them with an opposing army, encamped on the other side of the valley, and neither army dared to leave its stronghold to attack the defenses of the other.

II. THE PHILISTINE CHAMPION, GOLIATH. While the armies were in this position, within sight and speaking distance of each other across the ravine, there came out from the Philistine ranks a giant champion, who proposed that the Israelites should send forth a warrior to meet him, and have the whole battle decided by single combat. His name was Goliath of Gath. His height was six cubits and a span. "The exact value of Hebrew measures is uncertain. But the cubit, the length from the elbow to the tip of the middle finger, is believed to be about 14 feet, and the span, the distance from the thumb to the middle or little finger, when stretched apart to the full length, half a cubit, so that nine cubits and a span equal about nine feet nine inches.

III. THE ISRAELITE CHAMPION, DAVID. WHY HE CAME TO THE BATTLE FIELDS. The three oldest of David's brothers were in the army of Saul, only about 10 miles from home, and Jesse, feeling anxious for news about them, sent David to the camp with some fresh provisions. DAVID'S MEANS AND SELF-GOVERNMENT are seen in his treatment of his older brothers' talents. DAVID'S PERSISTENCE is shown by his whole course in reference to the combat, overcoming every obstacle. DAVID'S COURAGE. 32. And David said to Saul: when he had been called into the king's presence. 33. Thus art not able. The contrast between the giant in glittering armor, and the young man in shepherd's dress, with only a staff and sling, was very great. Saul set before David the great perils of the encounter. 34. There came a lion and a bear. Ver. when there came a lion or a bear. The lion and the bear were, in the days of Saul, common in Palestine; the country then was densely wooded. In some of the wilder districts bears are still numerous. 35. Thy servants slew both the lion and the bear. This was a proof of great courage, strength, and skill. These fierce wild animals were the terror of the shepherds.

DAVID'S FAITH. The slaying of the lion and the bear was also a proof of faith, for the deeds were done at great personal risk, not as mere acts of daring, but in the performance of duty. The consciousness of duty strengthened him. He acknowledges that "it was God who gave him the strength and courage. 37. The Lord that delivered me. The divine influence came upon him in answer to prayer. He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. What God has done is the assurance of what He will do. The fulfillment of God's promises in the past is the proof that He will fulfill them in the day to come. DAVID'S HONESTY, in that he made no parade of his courage, but attributed his success to the God in whom he trusted. DAVID'S GOOD SENSE. 38. And Saul armed David with his armor: rather apparel. Probably a special military dress adapted to be worn with armor. Over this was put the coat of mail. 39. And he assayed to go: endeavored to go, but he found this armor a hindrance rather than a help. By making the attempt David showed his courtesy and deference to his superior. An actual trial of the armor showed the king that David could do nothing in that way. For I have not proved them. Had not used such things enough to be able to use them effectively. DAVID'S ARMOR. David was dressed in his best simple shepherd dress. 40. He took his staff in his hand: a shepherd's staff, like a mountain walking-stick, cut from the woods, and used for aid in walking, and as a defense. "In Palestine, at the present day, the children, who are tending the flocks, almost always carry such a rod; the grown-up shepherds, a larger one of the same kind." And chose him five smooth stones. They were smooth so that they would fly the more swiftly and accurately at the mark; and five, so that if one failed others would be at hand. Out of the brook: which ran into the main ravine of the valley of Elah. He could not yet reach the ravine running between the two armies. And put them in a shepherd's bag. . . a scrip. A small bag or wallet made of the skins of fawns stripped of whole and tanned, in which was carried food and other things. And his sling was in his hand. The sling of the ancient Egyptians, which probably was of the same sort as that of David, was a thong of leather or string plaited, broad at the middle, and having a loop at one end, by which it was fixed upon and firmly held by the hand; the other extremity terminated in a lash, which escaped from the fingers when the stone was thrown. Thus armed, David drew near to the Philistine.

IV. THE SCENE OF THE COMBAT. We can have a much better idea of the story, and avoid some difficulties, if we have in our minds a clear picture of the scene of the combat. "Before us lies a deep valley, watered by a brook, running from the south-east to the north-west. The hills on both sides rise almost to the dignity of two mountains. The hills are so steep, that in the clear atmosphere of such a morning as this, those on opposite sides could easily converse with each other, and witness every movement of their antagonists. In the middle of the broad open valley

we found a deep trench with vertical sides, impassable except at certain places—a valley in a valley, and a narrow level between the two heights." Thus the two champions were compelled to go some distance down the stream, within easy speaking-distance of each other, before they could meet in combat, thus giving ample opportunity for the speeches they made to one another.

V. THE DISTANCE. 42. And when the Philistine saw David, he despised him: he looked contemptuously upon the youth, armed with a stick, as if he were intending only to drive away a dog from his sheep. He probably did not notice his sling. His appearance and weapons seemed an insult to the man of war, whose shield or spear alone weighed as much as David's.

43. Cursed David by his gods: Dagon, Baal and Astarte. The combat thus became a question not merely between David and Goliath, but between God and idols. If Goliath was successful, then idolatry would gain stronger hold of the people. 44. I will give thy flesh: by leaving his dead body exposed upon the ground. Homer constantly represents his heroes as dashing similar threats before battle. 45. Then said David to the Philistine. David's trust was exactly the opposite to that of the Philistine who trusted in his armor, his weapons, and his strength. David's trust was in God.

46. The Lord saith not with sword and spear: Brute force does not rule in this world. There is a power mightier than earthly weapons. At the same time David used the weapons he had learned in the path of duty to handle with skill. No amount of dependence on God will supersede the necessity of using the means God has placed in our power. There is no real faith without works. VI. THE BATTLE. 48. David hasted: in calm reliance upon God, and his skill with familiar weapons, like Cromwell's soldiers who "trusted in God, and kept their powder dry." 49. David . . . took thence a stone, and slung it. "On wings of faith and prayer the smooth stone took its fatal flight." And smote the Philistine in his forehead. The stone either entered at a point unprotected by the helmet, or it may even have penetrated and passed through the helmet itself. 50. Smote the Philistine, and slew him. The actual slaying of the Philistine is spoken of by anticipation in this verse. The stone stunned him, and felled him to the earth, but his life was not yet extinct. 51. Stood upon the Philistine, and took his sword . . . and slew him. Goliath was slain by his own sword, as Haman was hung upon his own gallows. David must have been strong as well as brave to wield so great a weapon.

This exploit awakened the hope and courage of the Israelites, and they pursued the fleeing Philistine army to their strong cities of Gath and Ekron. "Be Ye Goin' to Burn the Bridge Anyway." It is said that out west a train ran against a farmer's calf, and doubled it up so that it wasn't worth much as a calf afterwards. The farmer sued the company, but lost. Coming away from the court-house he said to a deacon of a church. "I'll get even with the railway company." "How so?" "I'll get even, if I have to do them damage. I'll burn the bridge yonder to-night." The deacon remonstrated to no effect. He mentioned the circumstance to his wife, who, when night came, insisted upon doing something to prevent the crime. "He was only joking; I'm sure he won't do it," said the deacon. "But we must do what we can to stop it," said she. So they set out, and found the man sprinkling the bridge with coal oil. He drew out a match, but the wind extinguished it. Finding he had no other matches, he spied the deacon approaching. "Let me have a match, deacon." The deacon, horrified, refused to become a party to it, and endeavored to dissuade the man. "Come, now, there are lots of matches, and if you don't give me one, I'll get one elsewhere; but I'd rather give you a dollar for a match than delay this business," said the man, excitedly. "My dear sir, think—"

"I'll give you a dollar, come, be quick!" interrupted the man. "Be ye goin' to burn the bridge anyway?" asked the deacon, slowly fumbling in his vest pocket. "Yes, I am." The wife caught hold of the deacon's coat tails to pull him away. "Now come, wife. It's my duty to look out for my own penny. In the time that's to support the family. My taxes are pretty heavy, and I must lighten 'em by every business-like method; and wrenching himself from the grasp of his helpless wife, he handed the match over, repeating the question— "You be a goin' to burn the bridge anyway?" "Yes," said the man. "Well, then, I wash my hands of the whole business," said the deacon, as he backed away. A moment more and the structure was in flames. Who, in the sight of God and eternity, is the most responsible for the burning of that bridge? And yet the attitude of thousands of Christians on the liquor question is that of the deacon. That which lightens taxes appeals to them with tremendous logic. "The business will be carried on anyway, and we might as well get what financial benefit there is in it." God have mercy on such sordid co-workers of iniquity. So far from washing their hands of the whole business, in the figment they imagine, the day of judgment will reveal the awful fact, their FALSHED HANDS WON'T WASH—Ez.

Wait. I saw the proprietor of a large garden stand at his fence and call over a poor neighbor. "Would you like some grapes?" "Yes, and very thankful to you," was the ready answer. "Well, then, bring your basket." The basket was quickly brought and handed over the fence. The owner took it and disappeared among the vines; but I marked that he was depositing in it all the white rich and various clusters from the fruitful labyrinth in which he had hid himself. The woman stood at the fence the meanwhile quiet and hopeful. At length he reappeared with a well-replenished basket, saying, "I have made you wait a good while, but, you know, the longer you have to wait, the more grapes."

It is so, thought I, with the Proprietor of all things. He says so to me, and to all, "What shall I give thee? What shall I do for thee? Ask, and thou shalt receive." So I bring my empty vessel—my needy but capacious soul. He disappears. I am not always so patient and trustful as the poor woman. Sometimes I cry out, "How long! how long!" At last He comes to me—how richly laden! and kindly chides my impatience, saying, "Have I made thee wait long? See what I have been treasuring up for thee all the while!" Then I look, and behold! fruits more richer than I had asked for; and I pour out my heart's thanks to my generous Benefactor, and grieve that I distrusted Him; and I carry away my burden with joy, and find that the longer He makes me wait, the more He gives. —Home Circle.

—An infidel farmer once said to his Christian neighbour: "I am as well off as you. I don't pray nor believe in God, but my crops are as good as yours, and when October comes I shall have as good a harvest as you." "True replied his neighbour, 'but God does not always rain in October.' When infidels point to the afflictions of those who pray and the prosperity of those who hate God they think they have reached the end of the argument. But there is ample time for God to vindicate His justice and reward His own.

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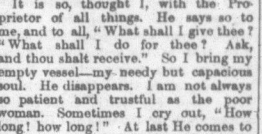
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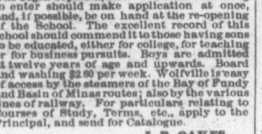
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