

David The Soldier and His Suffering - Part Two

by Charles E. Wigg

David the Soldier

David's musical ministry to Saul, must not have been continuous, even though it is said that 'Saul made him his armor bearer'. This must have been at a later date, because we find that when the events recorded in 1 Sam. 17 were recorded, David had returned to his lowly service as a shepherd, verse 17. He was quite willing to take of his father's bounty to his brothers who were in the army, fighting the Philistines, and also provisions to the captain of their thousand. He was also to take their pledge of loyalty and devotion. Little did he know what the outcome of that visit would be.

He left the goods, and excitedly ran into the ranks to greet his older brothers, only to be rebuked by them, and accused of pride and naughtiness of heart, because he was disgusted by the cowardice of the men of Israel's army. Though untrained as a soldier, yet he had proved God's protecting power that had enabled him to overcome and to kill wild animals that dared to attack his flock. Though doubtless saddened by the attitude, and criticism of his older brothers, yet he was incensed at the audacity of the Philistine giant, who dared to defy the armies of the Living God. He determined with the help of God, to remove this slur on his people, by slaying the giant. So one again he was brought before the one to whom he had ministered previously.

Saul reminded David of his inability, his youth, his inexperience, but David was only too aware of these things. He had something that neither Saul nor the army of Israel possessed, he had knowledge of God, and a simple trust in that God, based on experience. Saul then tried to clothe David in his own armour. The coat of mail was meant for Saul's protection of himself, but David put it off. He had no desire for self-protection. His faith was in God, He would protect him. So armed with nothing more than his staff, a shepherd's bag and a sling, he went down into that valley, the valley of Elah. Through the valley there flowed a brook, and from it David selected five smooth stones. It has been suggested by some, that David intended the other four stones for the brothers of Goliath, but it is extremely doubtful whether David knew anything about the giant or his family. But the number five in the Old Testament, suggests the idea of human weakness, and David was certainly conscious of his own weakness.

But he did not lack courage, a courage based on faith in God's ability to enable him to slay the giant. So it was that he ran to meet the giant. He was unperturbed by the Giant's curses, and testified to his own faith in the very God whom Goliath had cursed. He selected a stone from amongst the five he had chosen, put it in his sling, and with a deadly accuracy, born of experience, and helped by the God in whom he trusted, he slung that stone into the exposed forehead of Goliath, who crashed to the earth. David then cut off the giant's head, with his own sword. He thereby removed the reproach from cowardly Israel, and laid the basis for a mighty victory. Israel challenged by David's courage, then attacked and routed the Philistine army who fled, and many fell down slain.

David could not have known, that his simple faith, and his bravery, and the victory it gained, caused him to rise to become a type of Christ, 'great David's Greater Son'. Because centuries later the Mighty God, became incarnate, and was born of David's line. At the age of thirty three and a half years, he went down into the valley of death, and when he was crucified in weakness, nailed to a tree, (Elah means Oak), he met and destroyed the enemy of God and man. The poet has written,

"The strong man in his armour,
Thou mettest in thy grace,
Didst spoil the mighty charmer
Of our unhappy race!

His be the victor's name,
Who fought the fight alone,
Triumphant saints no honour claim,
His conquest was their own.

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Through weakness and defeat
He won the mead and crown:
Trode all our foes beneath His feet,
In being trodden down.

He Satan's power laid low:
Made sin, sin's reign o'erthrew;
Bowed to the grave, destroyed it so,
And death by dying slew.

Bless bless the conqueror slain,
Slain in His victory:
Who lived, who died, who lives again
In glorious majesty.

At the place called the 'place of the skull' The Lord Jesus there bore our sins in His own body on the tree, and in being slain, "Through death He destroyed him who had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb. 2:14).

When David had ended speaking with Saul, standing there with the head of the giant in his hand, he gained a life long friend. The soul of Jonathan was knit to David's soul. Jonathan is said on more than one occasion, to love David 'as his own soul'. His love, though appreciated by David, was a selfish love, he was always thinking of himself and the place that he would have in David's kingdom, if he became king. His words were, "You will be king, and I will be next" Jonathan's commitment was very impressive, he gave to David all that he had, except his sandals. It seems from this that he still reserved the right to go his own way.

The Suffering Soldier

David's conquest of Goliath brought an end to his work as a shepherd, because Saul took him, and would not let him go to his father's house again. He was now a full time soldier, and he was used of God to gain many victories over the Philistines. However he was still able to make use of his musical skills. Saul went from bad to worse, and added to his former maladies was the festering of jealousy in his heart. David as before, played his harp to soothe his troubled king, but Saul cast a javelin at him on two occasions. However such ill use did not change David's attitude, he did not return the unmerited jealousy. His place in the hearts of the people grew constantly, but Saul's jealousy also increased.

Saul thought that he would get rid of David, by catering for both his pride, and his lust. He offered David his elder daughter to David at a price. To secure the dowry would surely minister to his pride, & the possibility of having such a beauty as his wife, would surely feed the fires of his lust. But David was incorruptible at this point. His humility is to be admired, he shrunk from the honour of being son in law to the king. However Saul did not keep his word and Satan's plans were thwarted for the time. But not for long, because Michal, Saul's younger daughter fell in love with David. Again David's humility shone, but being persuaded by his fellow soldiers, he showed his courage once more, and gave Saul twice the dowry that he asked. Saul thought that Michal would corrupt David, but it was not to be so, David retained his simplicity and his honesty. Saul's jealousy increased, and he could see that god was with David, while God had forsaken him. He could not conceal his jealousy, and tried to get his servants to kill David. Thus it was that David began to experience the bitterness of being hated, without a cause, by the very one that he loved and served. This prepared him to write the Psalms that would express the very feelings of the One of whom he was a type.