

Ps 147:3
 Ps 65:2
 Ps 20:3,4
 Ps 33:5
 Ps 44:3; Hy 15:3,4
 1 Samuel 17
 Matthew 13:53-58
 1 Samuel 17:55a

Yarrow, November 1, 2009

Beloved Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ!

The account of David killing Goliath is one of the most favourite and well-known stories of the Bible, and perhaps outside the Bible too.

- Here a Question: why is this story in the Bible? Ie, how is the story of David and Goliath different from the story of Jack and the Beanstalk? Jack killed the giant too.... OK, Jack didn't have faith. But suppose we add a sprinkling of faith to Jack, how is David killing the giant different from Jack killing the giant? In other words: how would the lesson for us be different?
- We're modern people, living with today's questions and demands. For encouragement we read an old, old Bible. Shall we learn from Jack and the Beanstalk to be brave and cunning (chop down the bean plants of life to kill the enemy) and learn from David and Goliath to be brave in faith, do our best with the little stones we have and trust that God will kill our enemies/problems?
 - In truth, we struggle to find value in an account as David and Goliath.... *Why is this story in the Bible?!*

Turns out 1 Samuel 17 not in first place about David and Goliath. Read through Samuel: chaps 8-31 about King Saul. Chapter 17 not end with death of Goliath, but with Saul puzzled about David's identity. And it very revealing, and disturbing, that *Saul* is puzzled about David's identity. The Lord God tells us of Saul's question for our instruction & encouragement.

THE KING OF ISRAEL DOESN'T RECOGNIZE FAITH IN ACTION.

1. What King Saul didn't see,
2. What King Saul should have seen,
3. What King Saul was shown.

1. What King Saul didn't see

Text: "Saul watched David going out to meet the Philistine." We can see it happening:

- Royal tent likely on highest point of hill, with Israel's army stretched out in both directions, in battle array, all facing valley below. On yonder hill army of Philistines. In front of Philistine army one huge man hollering for someone to fight with.
 - Seen/heard him twice a day for 40 days: demanded someone to fight, cf vs 8ff.
 - Frightening sight: 9 feet tall, vs 4. Heavily armed, vs 5ff. Impressive, fearsome!
 - Not alone: in front his shield bearer.
 - Reaction of Saul's men: fear, cf vs 11, 24. Saul shared this fear.

- For 40 days nobody dared to challenge Goliath; each convinced Goliath walk all over him – not a chance to survive; hence king’s reward meaningless, cf vs 25.
- Saul watches – young lad David walking away from his royal tent.
 - Beside Saul still pile of armour he’d just had David try on, cf vs 38f, but discarded – too big, too heavy, lad not used to it.
 - David heading down Valley to meet Goliath.
 - Watch him walk forward to meet Goliath: confident. Hears Goliath shout his defiance. Would expect David to think better of his boldness, chicken out. Better red-faced before army than dead....
 - But Saul sees no fear, David not chicken out. Saul sees boldness, resoluteness.... That’s vs 55a.
- Saul keeps watching – as did all Israel’s soldiers on the hill. Saw David getting closer to Goliath, saw Goliath approaching David (vs 41) – tension mounts.
 - Heard Goliath curse & ridicule, cf vs 43f. Fear grips Israelite camp....
 - Hear David’s reply in 45ff?
 - We recognize this language, don’t we? Language of faith, ie, call on Lord, explain why does what does, confident of outcome.
 - But we know: talk, even pious talk, is easy. Saul could do it too, cf 37b. But *doing* the faith is different! That’s when we find out whether one’s faith is real or just talk.

Result: Saul asks Abner his army commander a question: “whose son is that young man?”

- Odd question! For Saul knew!! See 16:18f, 21f.
 - ∴ Bible critics: chap 17 must have happened before chap 16. OR: we have number of different stories here that someone put together into a book and missed editing out the repetition....
- But those who believe Bible comes from Holy Spirit can’t answer the perceived problem this way – for Holy Spirit has not put anything in Bible that isn’t important.
 - Rather, Saul knew David well, even “loved him very much” as 16:21 literally says. Through his music David had soothing effect on Saul (16:23). Yet asks vs 55a. How explain?!
- Same as explain Mt 13:53ff. Ie, amazement as Jesus’ teaching comes out in head-scratching: isn’t this the carpenter’s son? Isn’t His mother’s name Mary...? Ie, given who He is, “where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?” That is: what’s His real origin?!
 - Ibid Acts 2:7. What they know of these Galileans doesn’t explain how they can speak in tongues; hence the debate: who are they really? What’s happening here?!
 - That’s the sense of Saul’s question too. It’s exactly *because* he knows David that he puzzles: who’s this lad really?! Where does he get the courage to face Goliath?! This a head-scratcher for Saul.
 - He not recognize faith when he sees it!!
- But *that’s a puzzle!* Shouldn’t Saul have known what faith looks like? Should he know where David gets his courage from to face Goliath? 2nd point:

2. What King Saul should have seen

Who was King Saul actually?

- Yes, king in Israel. So: Deuteronomy 17:14ff true for him, especially vs 18f. So he to know Lord God as Israel's real King, and himself king under God.
 - So to know too how it possible for Israel to be God's people, ie, through sacrifices of tabernacle, where altar stands between God-in-Holy-of-Holies, enthroned on ark, and people outside.
 - As real King of Israel, God stipulates how king –His servant– to act. ie, king to trust King of kings, obey, believe that God will bless obedience. So: Leviticus 26:6ff; also 26:14ff, especially vs 17. Also vs 22.
- But what was happening in Saul's time? Wild beasts in the land, cf 1 Sam 17:34ff. Oppression from enemy, ie, Philistines, including 'wild beast' of a man like Goliath! And lots of fear in Israel, cf 17:11, 24. Note formulation of vs 24 in light of Leviticus 26:17b. Why?
 - Simple: unbelief, see Leviticus 26....
 - This unbelief not limited to Saul. See 1 Sam 8:5-8; 19f (also 10:19).
 - Who the king they receive? A man to look up to, cf 9:2; 10:23f. Point: impressive man! Ie, you want to trust in people to save you, you'll need this sort of person....
 - Samuel gives warning of covenant: 12:14f, cf Leviticus 26
 - How Saul act as king? Initially gives good impression, for fights Ammonites (chap 11) in strength of Lord, cf vs 6ff
 - But once securely on throne, Saul not act according to Deuteronomy 17, ie, not recognize that Lord is king in Israel. So not pursue mandate of 9:16 either.
 - In fact, Saul afraid of Philistines. Ie, the man Israel looked up to (literally!) led the way in being afraid. Why? A bigger man appears – Goliath, at 9 feet tall! Now Saul feels like the toad he is – and begins to look it too; he cowers....
 - Ie, despite his bigness of stature (head taller) and his bigness of position in Israel (king), he just a little man of dust.... And all flesh perishes..., cf Ps 56, 103, 146.
 - Only way Saul can be strong is rely on Israel's King, God almighty. But he doesn't, ie, no faith, no fear of God in his heart. He not *know* God.
 - As king in Israel, Saul *should* have recognized faith when he saw it. But he didn't, because he was out of step with central characteristic of people of God.
 - Best he could do was ask same question all unbelievers ask: there's something different about that kid. Who's he really?! What makes him tick? Is it his breeding? His upbringing? Where's he get the courage to approach Goliath?!
- Note: Saul not alone on this point. For none in Israel dared advance against Goliath! Though all in Israel ought to speak the language of David in vs 26 & 45ff, no one dares – and that speaks volumes re Israel's faith. Still, Saul as king is meant to set the example; as king under God he should know what trust in God means, and certainly what trust in God looks like.
- And now we recognize that human nature has not changed over the centuries. We privileged to be God's people, as Israel was in the Old Testament. So ascended Christ our King, more, believe He King in Canada/world. Confess He King in our homes/lives. So we to obey, trust. But: what trust look like? What is faith in action? We see so many failures, weaknesses in selves....
 - We look at others..., get jealous of them.... Wish we were David..., but feel like Saul.... We know: we should recognize faith, should demonstrate faith.... But so weak..., and we think: we haven't even *got* faith....

3. What King Saul was shown

Saul watched more. Saw David reach into bag on waist to select stone from creek. In slingshot, spin..., then Goliath fall flat.... David run to enemy, grab sword..., cut off head.

- Meanwhile, Abner gone to fetch David back to king.
 - So vs 57: David appears before Saul again, carrying Goliath's head as trophy.
 - What Saul see? Young lad, holding Goliath's head by hair, mouth that spoke curses now silent, eyes glazed..., enemy dead. Wound on forehead...
 - Saul see faith?? Not at all. Repeats Q of text: "Whose son are you?" – vs 58. What sort of upbringing did you have that you can do this?! What's your background, how are you?!
 - Saul saw nothing beyond what naked eye can see, and it's all a riddle to him.
- Hence David's answer: "I am the son of your servant Jesse of Bethlehem." Duh. Saul knew that.
 - What's missing in this answer? We'd expect boasting here! But there's no bragging about how strong or skilful he was.... Simply plain answer: I'm part of Israel, raised in such and such a family. Ie, I a covenant child, been raised in faith (like Saul!), and so I know what trust and in obedience to God looks like. Nothing strange about that.
 - *This what King Saul was shown: faith does not boast in itself; man of faith does not boast of himself, own accomplishments, either. Here humility....*
- Saul's reaction? We're not told. Well, yes, we are. See chap 18: Saul afraid of David, wants to kill him. He recognizes: there's something behind David that's a threat to Saul. A threat because Saul doesn't recognize faith.

Now: why is this in the Bible God gave to Israel? To us?

- Simple: God sets before each Israelite the question: do you recognize faith? When you see obedience, when you see Biblically faithful *talk* pushed through to Biblically faithful *action*, can you identify what it actually is?
- Why is the Q important?
 - Israel was looking for a king. *But they had one, the sovereign Creator Himself* – what a privilege!
 - Saul as king-under-God simply failed to accept who Israel's King was, and so neither acted as king-under-God himself nor recognized what obedience to this King & trust in Him looked like.
 - David later on would do a better job. He knew God was King, and showed it too.
 - But he a sinful man, repeatedly dropped the ball.
 - But has been a King and still is a King who obeys His God perfectly.
 - Ie, His food was to do will of His Father – so obeyed God in every circumstance, even when He confronted by an enemy bigger than Goliath could ever be.
 - Jesus Christ anointed to be King in Israel, ∴ to desert to confront devil – and stood firm in obedience to God's instruction despite Satan being big enough to claim kingship over world – and Jesus being deathly hungry, cf Mt 4:1ff.
 - More, on cross of Calvary Jesus battled alone against forces of darkness, and though rejected by God as our sins were piled onto Christ, He continued to trust, obey.

-
- Now there's the Q: who do you say Jesus Christ is? Is He just a somebody who happened to die on cross, and show a pretty brave face in His death too? Who is He? What do you see on the cross?
 - Do you *see* His obedience, His trust, His faith in God even in the darkest hour? Or do you only see a broken body on the cross, just a man who perished like thousands others perished through crucifixion?
 - The Q is so important, not because then you can have faith like David did (and kill the Goliaths of your life) or have faith like Jesus had (and so triumph over the devil's attacks against you),
 - Rather, the Q is so important *because we daily confronted with our failures/weaknesses* – and we need the good news that someone is *bigger* than we are, able to obey God perfectly *in our place*, and atone for our sins too. *That is Jesus Christ!*
 - This is the gospel God set before Israel through the actions & victory of David: the better David is coming, King of kings!
 - And this the challenge for all Israel, Saul included: can you recognize faith in action? So important, lest you not recognize *Christ's work for what it is* – perfect faith for the salvation of those who believe so imperfectly.