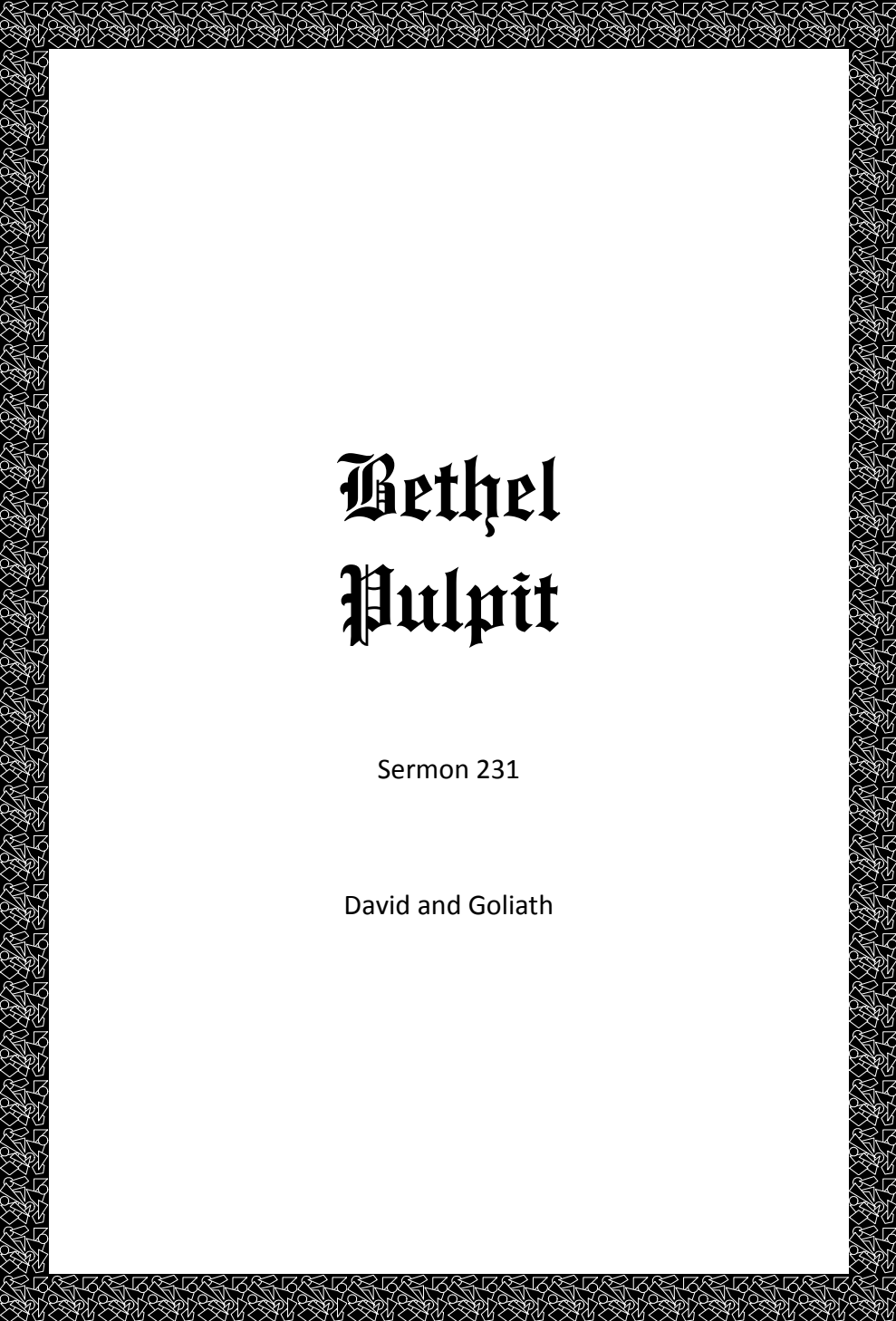




Bethel Pulpit

Sermon 231

David and Goliath

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day morning, 25th July, 2004**

Text: *"But I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied" (1 Samuel 17. 45).*

We believe that "*All scripture* is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable." These well-known stories of the Old Testament are not recorded just as a point of interest or just as a point of history, but they are recorded for the benefit of the Lord's people. Though times have changed, the saints of old had the same problems, the same difficulties, the same trials as the people of God today, and these accounts show us how the Lord enabled them to meet them, how the Lord was with them, how the Lord upheld them and helped them and brought them safely through, how the Lord delivered them. Now brought safely through, safely landed, for ever they sing God's praises.

"His grace sufficed saints of old;
It made them strong and made them bold,
And it suffices still."

This week, pondering this chapter – and really for many, many years I have loved this chapter, David and Goliath; there is so much in it – but pondering this chapter, William Cowper makes a very simple, very profound statement, and it is this: "Young David's God is yours." Now there is a lot there. This great God of Israel, this great God who measures the waters in the hollow of His hand, who metes out the heavens with a span, this great God who sitteth on the circle of the earth and the inhabitants before Him are as grasshoppers, this great God before whom Goliath was nothing – "Young David's God is yours." What a mercy this God – Israel's God, the God of the Old Testament, the God of Scripture, the God of David – "This God is our God for ever and ever: He will be our guide even unto death"!

Well, there are a lot of things in this chapter. The first thing is this: David got up that morning and it was like any other day. I know he was expected to go and visit his brothers, but it was like any other day. Yet his life was never the same again. By the end of the day, he was famous in Israel; he was great in Israel. Before the end of the day, he had had a terrible trial and he had had a wonderful deliverance. Sometimes you get

up in the morning. It is just an ordinary day. You do not know what there might be before the day ends. So it is wise right at the start of the day to commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him and He will bring *it* to pass, whatever that *it* might be. I do not think David had the slightest idea at the beginning of this day that anything remarkable was going to happen to him. But some of us can look back to days in our lives. It was perhaps a telephone call; it was perhaps a letter; it was perhaps a visit; it was perhaps some circumstance; perhaps some providence; and our lives were never the same again.

One thing is very clear: that David knew his God. How old David was, we cannot really say. You will find all the different opinions that have been given contradict one another. We do not know how old David was, but he was only young, yet he knew God, and he had had an experience of the Lord's love and mercy, and he could speak of it. One thing that stood out as we read the chapter this morning was this: what a holy zeal young David had for the honour and glory of God. I did feel in prayer what a wonderful thing it would be if in our congregations there were many of these Davids with such a holy zeal for the honour and glory of God. We hear so much about a false zeal, and a blind zeal, and zeal which is not according to knowledge, and zeal extinguished to a spark. O but may there be more of this true zeal for the honour and glory of God. If we read it once, we read it a few times: "And David ran." He could not get there quickly enough. He could not do God's will quickly enough.

One thing you will find is this: David, constrained by love to Israel's God, was enabled to take up this burden and to fight, to go and fight against Goliath. Now let us look at it. Humanly speaking it was an impossible thing. You remember, two armies, one each side of the valley of Elah, the Israelite army, the Philistine army. The Philistines have a great champion, an enormous man, a giant, and he takes up this challenge. Goliath cries, Let Israel choose a champion and the Philistines choose a champion. We see David's zeal and we see his valour, his concern for the honour and glory of God. You see David constrained by love. What happened? He was misjudged, he was misinterpreted, he was spoken against, he was insulted, he was abused, and that by his own family. I believe if you are sweetly constrained by the love of Christ to do anything for His sake, you well may be abused, but that will not prove you to be wrong.

“David said, What have I now done? Is there not a cause?” Not just, is there not a reason? but is there not a cause, the cause of God and truth? And some of the old divines said that David’s victory over his own spirit when he was so dreadfully insulted was a greater victory than his victory over Goliath. How we need to pray that prayer: “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with my spirit.”

Well, to come right down to the words I have read, David going to fight Goliath. David said, “Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield.” If you will, instruments of death; if you will, David seemed to be facing certain death; if you will, there was not a more foolish person on earth than David. O but that zeal for the honour and glory of his God, “the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied”! Surely some of you, many of you, are concerned for the honour and glory of God. These terrible happenings in the country, these dreadful things of which we read. “The God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.”

“Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts.” Now David knew the name of his God, and he knew this, that “the name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.” David knew the name of his God. First of all, he knew His name as the Lord of hosts. That is the name he mentions here. “I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts.” You know what the Lord of hosts means: the mighty God, the God who is in control, the God who is omnipotent. Hosts of angels obey Him; hosts of devils obey Him; hosts of circumstances obey Him. “The Lord of hosts.” It is no wonder that at a later time David cried, “The Lord of hosts is with us.” He knew it; he had proved it. “The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.” “I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts.” He could venture on that ground, the name of the Lord of hosts.

Another good Old Testament name of the Lord that David must have known well: Jehovah-jireh, the Lord will provide. Our hymnwriter says, “Jehovah-jireh is His name; from age to age He proves the same.” Now David knew the name of the Lord, Jehovah-jireh, the Lord will provide everything that is needful. And in a New Testament sense, “My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” Another name of the Lord that David must have known: Jehovah-nissi, the Lord my banner. So he could venture against Goliath just as once he ventured against the lion and the bear under the Lord’s banner, under

the shadow of the Almighty. “I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts.”

So David knew the name of his God. He knew the name of the Lord. But you and I in these happy gospel days are more favoured than David was, because we know the name of Jesus. We can sing what David never sang: “How sweet the name of Jesus sounds!” I believe that David had a glimpse by faith of his greater Son, the promised Messiah, but he never really knew that name of Jesus as we do.

“Then let the name of Jesus be
To us supremely dear;
Our only, all-prevailing plea,
For all our hope is there.”

I hope I have a congregation that loves the name of Jesus. “Thou shalt call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins.”

“I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts.” Never forget that this was a real giant that David was going to fight against – not a story book giant, not a fairy tale giant, but a real giant. Do not forget, you and I know the end of the story; David did not. Naturally it seemed the end of the story would have been very different. O but David knew his God. He was only young. We do not know how young, but there is such an emphasis how young he was. I wonder how many of you girls and boys here know the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. That is the great thing in religion, and one of the best tests I can give to the young and the old is this: do you really have to pray to God in secret? Now do you, or do you not? Those of you who never pray, you know it and God knows it. Those of you who only just say a formal prayer because you feel you ought, you know it and God knows it. Do you ever have to pray? And the second question: what do you pray for? Just to get out of trouble when you are in it, or just that some nice thing might come your way? Or do you have to pray, to put it simply, that God almighty Himself will bless you?

David was only young, but he knew God. You girls and boys, real religion is very profound and solemn, but it is very simple. It is really this: *to know God and to know ourselves*. To know ourselves in our sin and our need and to know God in the Lord Jesus as our Saviour. Now pray for it, that you might know yourselves and that you might know the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. “And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee

the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.” “To know my Jesus crucified, by far excels all things beside.”

“I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.” It is no wonder that when David was an old man he wrote, “I will go in the strength of the Lord God.” He looked back. He was only a boy. He had to face Goliath. “I will go in the strength of the Lord.” Though David was young, he could say something simply that God had done for him. He said, “There came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: and I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear.” But David added this: “The Lord ... delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear.” Didn’t David speak simply there? There were not any embellishments. You sometimes hear children talking of something they have done and it is such a wonderful tale. Well, David could have told a wonderful tale about this lion and the bear, but the beautiful simplicity of it. “The Lord ... delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear.”

But the point I have so often thought about and admired in David: he realised this, and it is a wonderful thing if you and I realise it, and I believe we do at times. David realised that the God who had helped him then would not fail him now; the God who had helped him in time past would be with him again. God does not answer prayer once and then the next time He fails to answer you. David said, “The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine.” “The Lord that delivered me ... He will deliver me.” Our God is a delivering God. This chapter has a trial and it has a deliverance. You could go through the Bible and there are dozens and dozens of places where you can see a trial and a deliverance. The Bible is a Book of trials and deliverances. And then you can look at your own little lives: trials and deliverances, trials and deliverances. And dear child of God, you will not have one more trial than you have a deliverance. “He shall deliver thee in six troubles,” says Job, “yea, in seven.” He will not forget you in that seventh. “The Lord that delivered me ... He will deliver me.” “He who has helped me hitherto, will help me all my journey through.” You look back, you look around, you look within, you look down, you look forward.

“His love in time past forbids me to think
He’ll leave me at last in trouble to sink;
Each sweet Ebenezer I have in review
Confirms His good pleasure to help me quite through.”

“I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.” Now perhaps some of you are saying, “Look, I have never seen a giant, yet alone had to fight against one. I don’t suppose the time will ever come when I do have to fight with a giant. So what has all this to do with me?” Now look, beloved friends, you will find things in your life and they are coming against you; they are in your pathway; they are coming to meet you, and it is just like a great giant that is going to overthrow you, going to harm you, going to lay you low. Giants. How are you going to meet these giants? How are you going to face them? Well, just as David did: “I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts.”

Now let us think of one or two of these giants. The unknown way, the future, tomorrow. I am sure some of you, perhaps many of you, have things in your life and they are in front of you, they are coming to meet you, and you are afraid of them. Perhaps you have that day written down in your diary. You shrink from it. You are afraid of it. It is a trouble to you, but there is no escaping from it. I suppose David could have turned round and run away, but he did not. You say, “These things, they have already come. How can I face them?” Well, “I will go in the strength of the Lord.” “I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts.” What does that mean? How are you going to face this giant? How are you going to face tomorrow, next week, the unknown way, the future? Well, “in the name of the Lord of hosts.” “Looking unto Jesus.” That is venturing forward in the name of the Lord of hosts, complete dependence on Him, no trust, no confidence in yourself, resting upon Him, hanging upon Him. That is venturing forward in the name of the Lord of hosts, looking to Him for help, all the help that you need; looking to Him for supplies. “All my springs are in Thee.” That is venturing forward in the name of the Lord of hosts, seeking wisdom from Him, how to handle your matters, how to order your ways, seeking grace from him. “Plenteous grace with Thee is found.” Seeking that He will answer your prayers, seeking that He will be with you. “I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts.” Now that is the only way really you can venture forward into the unknown way, whatever it holds for you.

“The ground feels firm and good;
And, lest we should mistake the way,
He lines it out with blood.”

O to venture forward in dependence, that way of hope, that way of expectation.

“I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts.” Now then, the unknown way, tomorrow, next week. What about the day of our death? That is a giant, isn’t it? “Who, except Jesus smiles within, can look the monster in the face?” Perhaps some of you say, “Well, you are always talking about death, and we don’t want to hear about it.” The one sure, certain thing with each one of us as we go forward is that one day, sooner or later, we must meet this giant, this monster death. “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” With some of us in our beginnings, this was laid so solemnly in our conscience. We were only young, but we knew our lives would one day end and we knew we were not ready, we were not prepared for the end. We were not prepared to die. We were not prepared to meet our Maker. May that be the great point with each one: “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.” To be prepared, to be forgiven, to repent, to believe, to be washed from all our sin and guilt in the blood of Christ.

“Fly, then, awakened sinners, fly;
Your case admits no stay;
The fountain’s opened now for sin;
Come, wash your guilt away.”

O but it is to venture in the name of the Lord of hosts, that name which is above every name, that name which is “Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” O you can rest secure on that name. “The sinner trusts to this alone, and finds the grand specific there.” O to think of our end, and perhaps our fears, and perhaps we shrink from it, but to venture in the name of the Lord of hosts.

“Yet, dearest Lord, when viewed in Thee,
The monster loses all his dread;
There all his frightful horrors flee,
And joy surrounds a dying bed.”

But be not deceived, it is a monster, it is a giant. Well, the Word of God says it is our last enemy. It is an enemy. Mercifully for the people of God, “the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.”

“I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts.” What other giant? Trouble. Our hymnwriter says, “Trouble, like a gloomy cloud,” but it is like a monster sometimes, like a giant. And let us be clear, what is a trouble to one is not a trouble to another. “The heart knoweth his own bitterness.” You have this trouble coming, or you are in this trouble. It may be your health. It may be your family. It may be your circumstances. It may be your relationship with other people. There is the conflict with sin and Satan. I am sure some of you will say, “Never mind the giant coming; the giant is already here.” Can you, dare you, must you venture forward in the name of the Lord of hosts? He is able to help you. He is able to bring you through. He is able to uphold you. He is able to answer your prayers. He is able to deliver you in the trying hour. He is able to bring that trouble to an end. He is able to be with you. “The eternal God is thy Refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.” O if you can only venture in the name of your God, in the name of Jesus, in the name of the Lord of hosts!

You know, beloved friends, I see something really beautiful in this verse, a sinner weak, helpless, and all these things before him, and yet he can venture forward, safely, confidently, even happily. Why? Because he knows that God is his God, because he knows God is with him, because he knows God is on his side, because he knows God will never leave him nor forsake him. There is something beautiful in David going forth against Goliath, something beautiful in a sinner going forth pleading the merits of Jesus, resting on the merits of Jesus.

“I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts.” Now I would speak very carefully and advisedly here. Going to meet a giant? Well, a sinner having to have dealings with God Himself. You say, “Be careful. Surely, surely you cannot compare our good and gracious God to Goliath.” No, not for a moment. But to some of God’s people in their burdens and concerns they see words like this: “Our God is a consuming fire”; “This of old Himself declared; Israel trembled when they heard.” Going before God, it is not seeing Him as such an one as ourselves, but seeing Him in His greatness, His glory, His grandeur, His majesty. He “can dash whole worlds to death, and make them when He please.” “How shall I come to

Thee, O God, who holy art?” And then to see it here through the Person and work of Jesus. “I come to thee” – safely, confidently – “I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts.” And no sinner ever perished there, venturing before a holy, heart-searching God with Jesus’ name our only hope, our only plea.

“I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts.”