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The Sabbath-School

INTERNATIONAL LESSON.

Third Quarter-Lesson IX.—Sept. 1.

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

THE CIRCUMSTANCES.—We are told "there was sore war against the Philistines in the days of Saul." The Philistines were a powerful warlike race. They had gathered in large numbers at the Boundaries of Blood, in the valley of Elah. The mode of warfare pursued by them was of the guerilla 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.

THE PHILISTINES' CHAMPION, GOLIATH.—While the armies were in this position, 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. The giant's name was Goliath of Gath. His height was six cubits and a span. The exact value of Hebrew measures is uncertain, but nine cubits and a span equal about nine feet nine inches. His body was defended by a coat of mail made of metal scale. Accompanying him was a man carrying a shield, large enough to defend his whole body, so that the giant could have the free use of both arms for attack. The giant stalked down into the valley, in sight of Saul's camp, and defied the armies of Israel, morning and evening for 40 days. His appearance struck dismay into Saul and all his people.

THE ISRAELITES' CHAMPION, DAVID.—Vers. 32-40. 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. It was the 40th day of Goliath's defiance, when David reached the camp, at the moment when both armies were drawn up, and the battle-cry was already raised. He left the bread and parched corn and cheeses, with the guard of the baggage, and ran into the ranks where his brethren stood. As he spoke to them, the champion of Gath approached and uttered his defiance, and all who stood near fled before him. The Spirit which rested upon David moved him with indignation at such a reproach of Israel. "Who," he asked, "is this Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" The by-standers told him that Saul would give his daughter to the man who should kill the Philistine, and enrich him greatly, and make his house free in Israel. Heedless of the taunts of Eliab, who rebuked his presumption with the authority of an elder brother, David repeated his inquiries till his words came to the ears of Saul. *And David said to Saul:* when he had been called into the king's presence. *Thou 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. *There came a lion and a bear.* The lion and the bear were, in the days of Saul, common in Palestine. *Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear.* This was a proof of courage, strength, and skill. The slaying of the lion and the bear was also a proof of faith, for the deeds were done at great personal risk, in the performance of duty. He acknowledges that it was God who gave him the strength and courage. *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.* The fulfilment of God's promises in the past is the proof that he will fulfil them in the days to come. If God would give David strength to deliver his sheep from wild beasts, how much more to save the people from one who defied His armies. *And Saul armed David with his armor:* Probably a special military dress adapted to be worn with armor. Over this was put the coat of mail. *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 superiors. 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. Saul's armor was not only useless to David, but it prevented him from using the weapons with which he had skill. *He took his staff in his hand:* a shepherd's staff. *And chose five smooth stones.* They were smooth

so that they would fly 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. *And put them in a shepherd's bag . . . a scrip.* A small bag or wallet made of the skins of kid. *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 throng 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. It was a true stroke of military genius in David, this determination of his to fight only with the weapons with which he was familiar. The giant was open to attack only on the forehead.

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. The hills on both sides rise almost to the dignity of mountains. The two hills are so near, that in the clear atmosphere of a morning, those on opposite sides could easily converse with each other. We may picture to ourselves the two hosts covering the low rocky hills opposite to each other. 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.

THE DEFIANCE.—Vers. 41-47 *And when the Philistine . . . saw David, he disdained him:* he looked contemptuously upon the youth, armed with a stick. He probably did not notice his sling. His appearance and weapons seemed an insult to the man of war. There is a legend among the Jews that when Goliath cast his eyes upon David, the sighs seemed so ridiculous, so amusing, that he threw back his head and laughed aloud. But this action threw his brazen helmet away from his temples, and just then the smooth stone from David's sling struck upon his forehead. *Cursed David by his gods:* 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. *I will give thy flesh:* by leaving his dead body exposed upon the ground. *Then said David to the Philistine.* David's trust was in God. He was fighting for God's cause, and not for himself. *The Lord saveth not with the sword and spear.* Brute force does not rule. 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 supercede the necessity of using the means God has placed in our power. There is no real faith without works. But all the smooth stones in Palestine would have been of no avail, unless God had guided their fight to the one small undefended spot on a man moving in haste.

THE BATTLE.—Vers. 48-51. *David hastened:* in calm reliance upon God, and his skill with familiar weapons. *David . . . took thence a stone, and slung it, and smote the Philistine in the forehead.* The stone either entered at a point unprotected by the helmet, or it may even have penetrated and passed through the helmet itself. *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. *Stood upon the Philistine with his sword . . . and slew him.* Goliath was slain by his own sword. 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.

PRACTICAL HINTS.

I. There are two kinds of giants for us to fight.

FIRST. Those in our own hearts, as, Temper, Appetite, Passion, Pride, Envy, Selfishness, Indolence, Worldliness, Unbelief.

SECOND. Those in the world around us,—as, Intemperance, Irreligion, Vice, Dishonesty, Intolerance, Worldliness, Unbelief.

They are boastful, self-confident, defiant, strong. Worldly power and numbers are on their side. They are entrenched in sinful human nature, in the wealth and custom of the world. No merely human power can overthrow them. Faithfulness in humble, daily

duties in preparation for the greater works of life.

The great danger that besets the Christian is that of attempting to fight with the world's weapons. Let him go forth with the cross of Christ in his hand, and by that he will conquer; but if he seek a lower weapon, and try to fight with earthly philosophy, or with mere social expedients, he will fail. So long as we preach Christ crucified, it matters not though men ridicule it as foolishness; it shall prove to be "the power of God and the wisdom of God."

Every person can do best with the weapons with which he is most familiar and has the most skill. If we are to overcome the giants, it will be by accustoming ourselves to the use of the sword of the Spirit in daily life.

The lesser victories prepare us for the greater. We must conquer the lion and bear before we can have assurance of victory over the giants.

The qualities we need are like those of David,—diligence, faithfulness, meekness, humility, courage, piety, perseverance, activity, good sense, faith in God.

The victory comes through the use of means in reliance on the help of God in the path of duty. Only God can give the victory.

WAS BADLY SOLD.

Jim Was a Character Reader, but Finally Got Off His Base.

"Yes, I'm in mourning," said the man, as he carefully removed his hat and gazed at the piece of crape which hid the band. "It's for my brother Jim who was planted about five months ago."

"Sick long?"
"Not a minute."
"Accidentally killed, then?"
"You might call it an accident, but it wasn't. It was a case of misreading human nature."

The man tenderly brushed some dust off the crape, put on his hat, and after getting good and ready started out with:

"Me and Jim had a ranch on the Republican river in Kansas. I didn't amount to much, but Jim was a dandy. He could size up a man as quick as you could halve an apple. Didn't know what fear was and the Injuns was as afraid of him as death. I've put a three-hundred-dollar monument at his grave and you can judge by that he must have been a pretty good man."

"Well!"
"Well, late last fall when we had a stock sale at the ranch a sort of tramp came along and got in Jim's way. Jim run over him and they had some words. The tramp wanted to fight and the boys put Jim up to skeep the liver out of him. I'm free to say I didn't like the feller's looks. There was sumthin' back of his every-day look which had a gleam of danger in it. Jim sized him up for a runner and when I said the chap would fight Jim whispered:
"Pete, ye never knew me to be wrong, I'll skeep him till all his h'ar loosens at the roots."

"To make a great spread of it the boys fastened the two together by their arms and gave each a bowie-knife. They thought the tramp would back water when it came to the tying, but he didn't. He was right thar, and didn't even turn pale. It was agreed that they should fight at the word, and the word was held five minutes to let the tramp wilt. He stood like a rock, and Jim couldn't back, you see, without losing character."

"And they fought?"
"It wasn't much of a fight. Jim was as handy with the knife as any man within a hundred miles, but he stood no show in that rumpus. The word was given, the tramp made a lightning motion, and the next thing I see was Jim dead on the grass, his head cut almost off. Thar wasn't but one lick struck."

"And—and what?"
"Nothing much. The tramp ontied himself and walked off as cool as a bar'l of ice, and we planted Jim on a knoll back of the mule pen."

"What did the crowd say?"
"Said that my brother Jim had better stuck to readin' the character of mules and steers and let strangers alone, and I agreed. I'm in mourning for Jim, but I allow he bit off more'n he could chaw, and he shouldn't a done it. Crape looks well on mouse color, don't it? It's a reminder that in the midst of life we may bark up the wrong tree."

A TROUT'S GRATITUDE.

Hicks Was Kind to the Fish and Now They Try to Make Him Happy.

"A man named Hicks, who lives out in the hills of Arkansas, has on his farm a beautiful stream," says a writer in the Amateur Sportsman. "He attempted to stock it with trout, but soon discovered that the water was too warm. Not discouraged, he proceeded to cool the water. He started an ice factory, and every morning now during the summer he deposits ice in the different pools. Well, sir, it would tickle you to see the fish. When a wagon draws up to a pool the driver yells 'Ice!' and the fish come flying out from under the rocks. They get up on the ice and carry on in a perfect flutter of glee. Beats any thing I ever saw."

"You know Hicks, do you, Dave?"
"Know him? Why, he doesn't live more than two miles from my place."

"Does he allow anybody to catch the trout?"
"He will give you all you can catch with a hook."

"I believe I will go out some time."
"Won't do you any good."
"Why?"

"The fish won't bite for anybody but Hicks."

"They won't?"
"No, sir; you couldn't get a nibble."
"How do you account for it?"
"Gratitude."

"What?"
"Gratitude, I tell you. They know Hicks. They know how much he has done for them. Why, sir, he can pull them out as fast as he can throw in. You ought to see them look up in his face and smile. One day I was with him. Two of the biggest trout I ever saw began to fight for the hook. One of them got it, and the other one, determined not to be outdone, came out on the bank and lay down. I never saw such gratitude."

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