

TRUSTING IN THE LORD'S STRENGTH

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Lesson: I Sam. 17:1-11, 32-50.

The story of David and Goliath is a story of great bravery. Here was a giant of a man, a huge soldier over nine feet tall, with very strong armor, and a man to carry his shield, and a spear so thick that most men couldn't have used it. He challenged every soldier of Israel to come and fight him, but they were all afraid, and they were ashamed of themselves for being afraid. But David was not afraid. He was a very young man, not yet even in the army, yet he dared to fight Goliath.

Why were all the other soldiers afraid? They were frightened because they felt sure that they would lose to the Philistine, and they felt this way because they trusted in their own strength. David was brave because he trusted, not in his own strength, but in the Lord's strength. He felt sure that the Lord wouldn't let an enemy soldier shame the armies of Israel and get away with it. Do you remember what he said: "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" Remember also what he told Saul: "The Lord hath 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." So David went, and the Lord went with him, and guided his hand so that the stone he slung at the giant hit him in one of the very few places where it would kill him.

These days, children, the Lord doesn't do miracles in exactly the same way that He did then, so we are not to suppose that if we go to fight against a bully much larger than we are, we will always win. Still, the story of David and Goliath teaches us how to be brave. At times in our lives we are going to be tempted to be afraid to follow the Lord, and ashamed even of our church: just as the soldiers of Israel were ashamed, because they were frightened to fight the Philistine.

Some of us may be tempted to be ashamed to say what church we belong to. When we go to high school, we may feel that the older boys will laugh at us if we say that we belong to the New Church, and say, "What kind of church is that?" We may even feel afraid to say that we go to church every Sunday, because a lot of the bigger children don't go to church, and they laugh at children who do. We know it's right to go to church, but we're a little afraid to admit it to some people, and we're probably somewhat ashamed of ourselves for not being brave enough to say what we know is right.

We may also feel scared at times of doing what is right. We may tell lies to our parents, because other children say it's silly to tell the truth all the time. We may cheat at school, because the whole class cheats in some way or another. We may listen, and even laugh at language that takes the Lord's names in vain, and at jokes about the Lord, because we don't feel brave enough not to laugh. When we do things like these, we feel a little ashamed of ourselves, don't we?

The trouble is that in many of the places we go, we find people who seem to be much bigger and stronger and cleverer than we are, and they are doing these things. It seems that we, who have been taught what is right, are weak ones, and they are the strong ones. Perhaps we feel like soldiers in the army of Israel, listening to the huge Goliath laughing at our armies and calling us weak, and we don't dare go out and fight. Especially as boys grow up, they think it is strong and clever to laugh at churches and even laugh about the Lord, and because they are bigger than we are, it seems hard not to follow them.

Goliath seemed large and strong too. Yet he died. He was killed by a young man, and his head cut off, and that young man went on to become king of Israel.

The lesson here is that we need never be afraid of doing what is right, nor ashamed of standing up for the Lord's church. We should, and we also can, learn to be proud of our church, and willing to stand by it against anyone who laughs at it.

You see, the things we are afraid of are not important. We think that the bigger boys at a school are very important when we are the small ones: but later we realize that they're no better than we are. We think that people who act tough and laugh at religion are very strong and brave, and even clever. They aren't. They are stupid. They are stupid, because the truth is that the Lord *is* our God, and He *does* rule over all the earth. Those same people who think themselves so brave are ruled by Him: they cannot take a breath, they cannot have anything at all without Him. Isn't it foolish to laugh at the God who has given them their strength, and their food, and their clothing, and the world in which they live? If the Lord were to take these things away from them, where would they be? How silly it is, then, for them to act in the way they do.

We need not be ashamed of what we feel. It is they who should be ashamed. So also we should never be ashamed of saying we go to a church which worships and obeys the Lord. Going to church is the only sensible thing to do, because the Lord rules every little bit of our lives, and we had better learn what His laws are! Long after evil men, who hate the Lord and try to laugh at Him, have lost all their power, the Lord will still rule. If, then, we are behaving sensibly by going to church we should be proud of it, not ashamed of it; and we shouldn't be afraid to say that we think we're right.