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## Goliath, the Big Man who Met a Pebble

*by T. Austin-Sparks*

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*(For boys and girls)*

We are not told anything about Goliath's history, but we are left to guess, and I think that our guess will not be far wrong. It is something like this.

When Goliath was born everybody wanted to see this great big baby. It was the talk of all the neighbours. As he came to boyhood, everybody who came to his home said: 'My, what a big boy you are getting!' Later, as a teenager, other boys made him their champion in all their quarrels, adventures, and battles. Some boys may not have liked him, but when he came their way they all ran for their lives, and hid whenever they could. The word went round: "Here comes Golly. Let's get out of his way!" Then when he reached manhood he joined the army. Being about nine feet tall, or perhaps eleven feet, his armour weighed two hundred pounds. The head of his spear alone weighed twenty-five pounds. It is not surprising that he was made the champion of the army! He was such a big man, but the unfortunate thing was that all that talk about him in babyhood, boyhood, youth and manhood (in his own presence) had got into his head and made him feel very self-important and self-sufficient. He had such big ideas about himself that, not only did he think himself to be more clever than other people, but he got the idea that he was bigger than God.

So, when Israel was drawn up for battle with the Philistines, the Philistines pushed Goliath forward and said to him: 'You just let them see you and hear your big voice, and we shall have no more trouble.' Unfortunately, the Israelites were in such poor condition that it worked, and when 'Golly' strutted out and shouted his challenge, they all fled and hid themselves. The situation seemed hopeless for Israel. What could be done?

Well, let us leave them and Goliath for a moment and go some miles away.

Outside of the city of Bethlehem was a field, and in that field there was a flock of sheep, and looking after those sheep was a youth, perhaps another teenager. The sheep were his father's; therefore he had a special sense of responsibility for them, and he took this responsibility seriously. This sense of responsibility became a very strong thing in his character and was going to be a big factor in his history. Well, there he was, through the long days and nights looking after the sheep. How did he pass the time? Did he just lie on the ground and sleep away the hours, or lie awake and dream 'day dreams' of unreal and impossible things? Not at all! There were certain things that he did which were going to have a big place in his later life, although he did not know it when he did them. One thing was that he made some musical instruments and taught himself to play them, and sing. He collected some reeds, hollowed them out, cut them into different lengths, bound them together in a row and played tunes on them. Then, because he had no song-book he made up his own songs (Psalms). Perhaps as he watched and cared for his father's sheep the twenty-third Psalm took shape in his mind. He may even have played it on his instrument.

But there was another musical instrument that he made. He went to a tree and cut a strong branch that would bend just so much, but needed some strength to make it do so. To this he fastened some strings of different lengths and made the branch stretch them very tight and taut. This was a harp, and he became so expert in playing this that later on the King made him his harpist, and with it he composed a whole big volume of Psalms.

One other thing occupied his time. He practised throwing stones from a sling at objects which he set up at a distance. So expert did he become in this stone-slinging that he could hit an object just where he wanted to hit it, and with such force that the stone either lodged in the object or smashed it. One night a lion came into the field to carry off a sheep. Our young man just lifted up his heart to God and said: 'Oh, God, help me to save the sheep and kill that lion.' Well, it happened, and the lion never got away alive. On another occasion a bear tried the same thing, and suffered the same fate.

There came a day when his father said to him: 'Son, you know that there is a war on and your brothers are in it. I want you to go and see how they are. Don't go empty-handed; take some fruit and other things, and bring me a report of how the war is going.' So he went, and while he was asking a few questions about the war, old 'Golly' appeared and started shouting, asking for a man to come and fight him. Our young friend thought: 'Well, I may not be a giant, but only a shepherd, but when that lion and bear roared at me and tried to destroy the sheep, I prayed to God and He helped me to destroy them. Why should not this fellow meet the same God? Oh, God, who helped me then, in Your name and strength I will go for this fellow.'

So, going to a stream, he chose five smooth stones, pulled his sling from his belt, and, telling old 'Golly' that it was not him but God that he had to answer to, he put one of the stones in his sling, and as he ran toward the giant he swung the sling round his head with such force that you could hear the whiz, and then released it and away the stone went. Well, it reached the mark and someone has said that 'nothing like that had entered Goliath's head before'. You know the rest of the story and the rest of David's life.

Many things can be taught us by this account. May I mention some?

We never know what God has in His mind for our lives, but faithfulness now, a real sense of responsibility, and learning to trust and prove God in our present difficulties, will certainly be of tremendous value in days to come.

Under God's eye - all unknown to us - we may be being trained for a life-work of great value to Him.

And, our present situation may give us the opportunity for showing that it is not for ourselves, but for God's interests that we live. Then, what old 'Golly' discovered: that it takes a very little thing with God in it to bring down the very big and self-important things.