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FIGHTING LIONS AND BEARS

The title above may seem odd at first, but rest assured, everything about that title is Scriptural! Not only is this so, but it has applications in our lives (Rom. 15:4). Long ago, when David was told he couldn't fight and kill Goliath because of his youth, he ably defended his ability to fight and slay Goliath, the "man of war." He told Saul, *"Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and 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: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God. David said moreover, 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" (I Sam. 17:34-37). Of course, we know that David was used as God's instrument for killing Goliath and putting to flight the armies of God's enemies (I Sam. 17:49-53). David, with just a smooth stone and slingshot, brought down the giant. He then beheaded Goliath with his own sword, and became a hero to the nation of Israel (I Sam. 18:7)! Perhaps after reading this account of David, we've looked at our lives and made a vow to God that if there are ever any giants to fight in a spiritual sense, the Lord can rest assured we'll fight them (II Cor. 10:4-6)! **A Testing Ground.** A question or two is in order as we think about Goliath. First of all, if you believe you're ready to fight

“Goliath,” ask yourself how many “lions” and “bears” you’ve killed so far. You see, David knew he was ready to fight Goliath based on his earlier testing with the lion and bear. He knew God had delivered him from the lion and bear, and knew God could deliver him (and all of Israel) from Goliath and the Philistine army (I Sam. 17:37). Friend, if you haven’t fought the “lions” and “bears” yet, how can you know you’re ready to fight “Goliath”? Furthermore, when we realize that our lives are a series of choices, decisions, habits, and consequences, if we don’t make the right choices today, how can we know we’ll be going the right direction tomorrow? In other words, if David hadn’t been tested with the lion and bear, do we honestly think he would’ve been fighting Goliath? If he’d not learned to trust God in the “little” things, would he have been trusting God for the “big” things (I Sam. 17:37; Matt. 25:21, 23; Lk. 16:10, 19:17)?

Who’ll Fight The Lions And Bears? Sadly, too many Christians wish to sit back, take it easy, and allow others to take care of their “light work,” while they wait on the “big” things, or what they determine to be the “important” things to occur. In

reality, what happens is that these are the same people who, rather than jumping to the Lord’s service in the “big fight,” will sit on the sidelines, encamped and entrenched on the mountainside (I Sam. 17:3). They will watch and wait in fear while the enemies of God blaspheme and taunt God’s children (I Sam. 17:10-11; 16). Then, these folks (who were waiting and watching for the “big” thing to happen) will insult and insinuate false motives to those who’ve fought their “lions” and “bears” and are ready to step up and serve the Lord in a greater capacity. If you don’t believe this, look at the disdain and disrespect shown by Eliab to David in I Samuel 17:28. If Eliab or any of the other soldiers had been what they were supposed to have been, there would’ve been no need for David to have fought Goliath! As it was, David had to do the soldiers’ job because they wouldn’t do it! Sadly, this situation is played out much too often in the lives of Christians. Brethren, could it be that we’re resentful of some folks because we know they’re doing “our” job? For those satisfied to “play church” and “take their pew,” it unnerves and upsets them when they see others doing what they know they ought to be doing. In

I Samuel 17, if David had just delivered the food his father sent, and talked with the men and moved on, Eliab never would've said what he did. Yet, when David stayed, asking questions, and showing genuine concern for his countrymen, Eliab rebuked him! How hypocritical! **Have You Fought The Lions And Bears Yet?** Brethren, ask yourselves how many lions and bears you've fought in your lives as Christians. Have we killed any yet, or are they feasting on the flock? **1)** Have we killed the lion of lust that enters the camp and says, "You can look, just don't touch!" (See: Job 31:1; Matt. 5:28; I Jn. 2:16)? **2)** Have we slain the bear of boasting that destroys souls through pride and an arrogant attitude (See: Prov. 8:13, 29:23; Jas. 4:10; I Pet. 5:5-6)? **3)** Will we kill the lion of fear, which scares us into inactivity because we're afraid of what might happen, or what someone might say about us because we serve God (See: Matt. 25:18, 24-25)? **4)** Will we slay the bear of apathy, who encourages us to "hibernate" and be engaged in a spiritual slumber when we ought to be alert and vigilant (See: Rom. 13:11; I Cor. 15:34; Eph. 5:14; Rev. 3:2)? **5)** Will we kill the lion of

procrastination that would have us waste our years in vain pursuits rather than live our lives for God (See: Eph. 5:16; Col. 4:5)? **6)** Have we slain the lion of selfishness whose work efficiently and subtly results in lost souls? Honestly, can we think of *any* sin that *doesn't* have its root in selfishness? The fact that one transgresses, or omits God's commands rather than obeys Him is an outgrowth of selfishness, pure and simple (II Jn. 9; Jas. 4:17)! Have we put selfish interests aside to selflessly serve our Lord (See: Rom. 12:1-2; Col. 3:1-2)? **7)** Have we killed the bear of false doctrine which tries to teach us man's ways instead of God's way (See: Matt. 15:8-9)? False doctrine, like the mighty bear, can bring "*swift destruction*" upon its prey if we aren't careful (II Pet. 2:1). **Conclusion.** May this lesson help us to appreciate better fighting the lions and bears. Upon our defeating such "small" things as we have listed above, we can ready ourselves for the "big" work. This is what happened to David! Fighting and defeating the lion and bear prepared his heart and strengthened his faith in God.

- Jarrod Jacobs



MONTHLY CHALLENGE

DIRECTIONS: Each first Sunday of the month, we will have challenges that you should attempt to complete by the end of the month. If we all, as members, complete these challenges, our church will grow in spirit and in number.

1) Hiding God's Word In Our Heart Challenge

Psalm 119:11 *"Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You."*

God's word is a sword for us to fight evil with in temptation. This particular sword is not to be kept in a sheath worn on a belt attached to our hip, but rather hidden deep into our hearts ready for use. While we could have a bible strapped to our waist at all times if we preferred, still, this is not the most effective method of battling sin by turning to a passage as fast as possible. It is to be so impressed upon us that the familiarity of the meaning of its words is so entrenched deep within us that sin becomes near impossible to penetrate through. As the Psalm indicates, His word is to be treasured deep within us to guard our souls from sin. Memorizing scripture is a great way to bury it deep in our hearts. While there are plenty of lengthy Psalms within the scriptures, there are several shorter ones which would be great practice for memorizing. Psalm 26 is a mere 12 verses which outline the kind of character God is pleased with which would be great to commit to memory. Psalm 120 through 131 are all Psalms 10 verses or less which would fill our hearts with the pure love of God. How many can you memorize?

2) USING YOUR BIBLE IN THE WORLD

Share the following verses with someone who does not attend this congregation at least twice this month:

Psalm 26:1-12

"Vindicate me, O LORD, for I have walked in my integrity, and I have trusted in the LORD without wavering. Examine me, O LORD, and try me; test my mind and heart. For Your lovingkindness is before my eyes, and I have walked in Your truth. I do not sit with deceitful men, nor will I go with pretenders. I hate the assembly of evildoers, and I will not sit with the wicked. I shall wash my hands in innocence, and I will go about Your altar, O LORD, that I may proclaim with the voice of thanksgiving and declare all Your wonders. O LORD, I love the habitation of Your house and the place where Your glory dwells. Do not take my soul away along with sinners, nor my life with men of bloodshed, in whose hands is a wicked scheme, and whose right hand is full of bribes. But as for me, I shall walk in my integrity; redeem me, and be gracious to me. My foot stands on a level place; in the congregations I shall bless the LORD."