

# THE BOUNDARY OF BLOOD

## 1 SAMUEL 17:1-11

Text: 1 Samuel 17:1

1 Sam 17:1) "Now the Philistines gathered together their armies to battle, and were gathered together at Shochoh, which belongeth to Judah, and pitched between Shochoh and Azekah, in Ephesdammim."

Introduction:

I admit the title of this message sounds a little odd, but it is taken directly from the text. It is the translated meaning of Ephes-dammim, the name of the area in which the Philistines prepared to meet the Israelites in battle. It was known as Ephes-dammim, or the Boundary of Blood, because of the frequent battles that had been fought in that region.

Throughout the centuries, the names of the warring factions had changed, but the place where they met in battle had remained the same.

In our text, it is the Israelites and the Philistines who met for war – the people of God and enemy of God's people. That is the way the Philistines are presented throughout Scripture.

- They were permanently at war with the Israelites.

- They were always for whoever was against the Jewish nation.
- They were a cruel people who never lost the will to fight.
- They were quick to invade Israel at the slightest sign of weakness.

In Scripture, the Philistines are a type of all the things of the world that obstruct, oppose, and enslave the people of God.

When we step outside the doors of the church, we are in the territory of the Philistines. Everywhere we go we encounter the enemies of God. Call it the world, or call it Ephes-dammim, the Boundary of Blood – the place of continued warfare. In the world, we experience:

- Conflicts of morality.
- Battles for truth.
- A never-ending war for the souls of lost humanity.

I believe the Philistines run our Public Schools.

I believe they are entrenched in Hollywood.

I have no doubt they have representatives in religion.

They are responsible for the porn industry, the abortion mills, and the liquor and drug trade.

They promote violence and pervert morals.

Often it seems they have God's people cringing in fear as far from the front lines as they can get. We seem too quick to take the easy way out – avoiding the conflict, but also contributing nothing towards a victory.

Tonight, I want us to see how the Philistines operate. I know, the labels have changed, but the conflict is just as real. The Boundary of Blood is just outside these doors, the battle is set in array, and the enemy is waiting.

## **1. THE CAMP OF THE ENEMY (VERSES 1-3)**

### **A. Philistine Encroachment (Verse 1)**

Verse one records that the Philistines were gathered together at Shochoh, which belongeth to Judah. They had invaded the territory that belonged to Judah. They were occupying that which rightfully belonged to the people of God.

Let me point out a couple of truths:

- The enemy can only occupy what we yield.

James 4:7 – Resist the Devil and he will flee from you.

Ephesians 6:27 – Neither GIVE place to the Devil.

Romans 6:12,13 – LET NOT sin therefore reign in your mortal body ... NEITHER YIELD ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin.

James 4:4 - ...know ye not that FRIENDSHIP with the world is enmity with God?

The Philistines take what we give them through indifference, neglect, disobedience and compromise.

- Philistine occupation could have been prevented.

What was needed was a Deborah, a Gideon, a Samson, or a Jephthah – someone who would have claimed God's promises and confronted the enemy in God's power. That is the consistent testimony of Scripture. God is looking for available men and women, committed teenagers, anyone who will stand in His strength and confront the Philistines in His power.

The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy: yea, they have oppressed the stranger wrongfully. And I sought for a man among them that should make up

the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none. (Ezekiel 22:29-30)

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds.) 2 Corinthians 10:3-4

### B. Preparation for Engagement (Verses 2-3)

The two armies are camped upon two hillsides with a valley between them. According to what I have read, the terrain is unique. The valley itself is broad and open, but running down the middle of it is a deep trench, or ravine. The sides of the ravine are nearly vertical. It formed a natural barrier between the two armies that could only be breached in a few places. So, as the armies faced each other, they knew exactly where the conflict would take place.

Mark that down in your mind. The points of conflict were clearly defined.

The points of conflict are clearly defined for us today.

We know where the battle must be joined if the Philistines are going to be driven from those areas that belong to the people of God.

Who is going to teach our children the truth?

Who is going to teach our men and women the truth?

- The truth about morality and character
- The truth about creation
- The truth about truth

Who will define the family?

- Are we going to accept the Biblical definition of one man joined to one woman for life?
- Are we going to adhere to the Biblical model in which men are appointed the leaders of their home?

Who will define human sexuality? Will we defend the truth

- That "Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge;"
- That homosexuality is a "vile affection"

How are we going to define right and wrong?

In a manner of speaking, the Philistines still exist.

In recent years, they have again pitched in Ephesdammim. The line of battle has been drawn, and the points of conflict defined.

## **2. THE CHAMPION OF THE ENEMY (VERSES 4-7)**

### **A. His Appearance (Verse 4)**

Goliath is not a myth or fable. He is not the product of an overzealous scribe. When the Bible says his height was six cubits and a span, you can believe it – all 9 ½ feet of him. Archaeologists have found a number of giant skeletons in the Jordan Valley. They have unearthed their homes. They apparently lived in the area for centuries.

There is at least one conclusion that we can draw from Goliath's stature. He was bigger than any single man in Saul's Army. Saul stood head shoulders above any man in his army. That means Goliath towered over the average soldier. We would be foolish to underestimate the threat he posed.

### **B. His Armament (Verses 5-7)**

The shaft of his spear was a 4 by 4, and the head weighed about 25 pounds. Protecting his upper body

was a coat of mail weighing about 200 pounds. Upon his head was a helmet of brass, and brass "chaps" protected his legs.

Goliath was "dressed to kill," but not to be killed. He represented all the might of the enemy, and he looked invincible. He was the enemy's champion because his appearance and his armor were enough to give anyone second thoughts about grappling with him.

I think we need to understand that the Philistines are always going to meet us with things that are bigger than we are.

It is only natural that we ask ourselves how we can possibly win against such formidable odds. But God anticipated these battles. He knew there would be times when we could not match our enemies for size or strength.

READ DEUTERONOMY 20:1-4.

"When thou goest out to battle against thine enemies, and seest horses, and chariots, and a people more than thou, be not afraid of them: for the LORD thy God is with thee, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. {2} And it shall be, when ye are come nigh unto the battle, that the priest shall approach and speak unto the people, {3} And shall say unto them, Hear, O Israel, ye approach this day unto battle against your



enemies: let not your hearts faint, fear not, and do not tremble, neither be ye terrified because of them; {4} For the LORD your God is he that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you."

READ EPHESIANS 6:10-18

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. {11} Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. {12} For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. {13} Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. {14} Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; {15} And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; {16} Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. {17} And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: {18} Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;"

### **3. THE CHALLENGE OF THE ENEMY (VERSES 8-11)**

#### A. Distinction

"Am I not a Philistine, ye servants of Saul"

The Philistines recognize that there is a difference between them and us. They hate what we stand for. The irony is that many Christians seem unable to see the difference. They do not seem to realize that the Philistines are the enemy. There is a tendency to sidestep the issues – to be passive towards divorce, to accommodate homosexuality, to conform to worldly standards and to bow to secular philosophies.

#### B. Declaration

"We will be your servants, ye shall be our servants"

Make no mistake; this is what the battle is all about. The world wants to bring us into bondage – to make us servants of its agenda, to conform us to its standards, to bring us into bondage to secular values and worldly principles. There can be no state of "peaceful coexistence." One side or the other must dominate.

#### C. Defiance

"I defy the armies of Israel"

Have you noticed how the media laughs off the threat of Christianity?

They parade their giants – humanism, evolution, socialism, feminism, and relativism.

They dare us to impede their progress. They have labeled us "socially irrelevant."

They dare us to make a difference.

D. Dismay

"All Israel ... were dismayed"

This is a sad note on which to end a message. The entire army immobilized by the sight of a solitary Giant. They were crippled by fear when they should have been triumphing in faith. They saw only the size of the Giant, forgetting the size of their God.

Conclusion

I want to close tonight by making this personal. Let's forget about the larger issues of life in general and talk about your life.

- What part of your life, all of which belongs to God, do the Philistines occupy? Where have they

set up camp to oppose and obstruct God's purpose for your life?

- What giant have you cowed with fear? We call them "besetting sins," unconquerable habits. It may be a moral problem, an attitude, something from your past for which God has forgiven you, but you can't forgive yourself.
- Are you letting the challenge of the enemy go unanswered – because you just don't feel like you measure up? Have you allowed the enemy to convince you that nothing you could do for God can make a difference?

We aren't shedding any blood over these issues, but the conflict is just as real and the stakes just as high.

Souls lay in the balance. Lives are being influenced.

Decisions are being made about God.

It matters how we conduct ourselves at Ephesdamim – The Boundary of Blood.