



# The Tri-Cities Edifier

Volume 5

October 7, 2018

No. 40

## What Bothers Us More?

by Doy Moyer

Now Eliab his oldest brother heard when he spoke to the men; and Eliab's anger burned against David and he said, "Why have you come down? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your insolence and the wickedness of your heart; for you have come down in order to see the battle." But David said, "What have I done now? Was it not just a question?" **(1 Sam 17:28-29)**

David had come out to where the Israelites were stationed as they were facing the Philistines and Goliath. The problem is that the Israelites were just posturing, too afraid to engage the great giant. They put on their battle array and shouted a war cry, but they didn't actually engage. David's brothers were among this number, afraid to go out against Goliath. Saul was offering a prize to anyone who would face and defeat Goliath, but none had accepted the challenge. David asked about it: "What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should taunt the armies of the living God?" This caused David's oldest brother, Eliab, to respond harshly.

This chapter presents several contrasts. This one is between David and Eliab. David was irritated that an uncircumcised Philistine was defying God's armies and was ready to act; Eliab was irritated that David asked about it. Perhaps David's questions caused Eliab embarrassment. Perhaps it reminded Eliab and others how much they were failing in their own faith and courage. Eliab, we recall, was rejected from being anointed by Samuel **(16:6-7)**. He had impressive enough height and stature, like Saul, but not the inner character that it took to be God's King.

Eliab is angry at David for questioning the situation that made his brothers look faithless. David wants to do something about the situation, not content that Goliath is going unchallenged, and this makes Eliab angry enough at David to charge David with wickedness. Wickedness! David is upset that the people are doing nothing but posturing, which was a reflection upon God and His people. Someone was going to be upset. Someone was going to have true, righteous indignation.

This account should cause us to reflect upon our own attitudes as we live in a world of great challenges to our faith. What incites us to action? Those who defy God and His people, or those who call attention to our posturing and inaction? The world that insults God and maligns His people, or those who challenge us to act from within?

"Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth?" **(Gal 4:16)** Telling the truth can make enemies, even among those who are supposed to be brethren. Even when done in love. Yet the truth still needs to be told, and we still need to consider and accept those challenges to better ourselves, to become more courageous, to be willing to engage as soldiers of Christ in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation by speaking forth God's message in clarity, conviction, and with grace and wisdom toward outsiders **(Col 4:2-6)**.

It seems sometimes that Christians are more motivated to speak up against other Christians who call attention to our errors and the need to faithfully act than they are to speak truth to a world that is continually denying and defying God. Like Eliab and the rest of Israel at this time, we may indeed fear the ungodly world more than we fear God. This is manifested by our silence in spreading the gospel and our anger at other Christians who are calling on us to act.

Better is open rebuke than hidden love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy. **(Prov 27:5-6)**

This kind of problem can also show up when new Christians show zeal for the lost, shaming those of us who have been Christians for a while but are content to "go to church" a couple times a week and leave it at that. We need to encourage the zeal, coupled with learning and knowledge, so that even more will be courageous in spreading the truth. And we need to join in the spread of truth to a lost world.

We need to check our attitudes. Are we making a religion that is more focused on our own personal convenience than upon God and others? If we get angry at the brother who asks about what we are doing while we merely posture in battle array toward the world, then our own lack of faith will be on display.

Are we more like David or Eliab in this scenario?

We must do more than put on battle array and shout war cries. We must show our faith and courage, putting our trust in the Lord who truly fights the battles. Let's thank God for those who call attention to what's really going on, and then join them in the real fight.

## How Does The Spirit "Bear Witness?"

- by Greg Gwin

Romans 8:16 says, *"The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God."* The big question is, of course, how does He do this?

There are many that would suggest that the Spirit "bears witness" by means of some better-felt-than-told experience. Usually we are given an account of some episode that left the person with an overwhelming emotional feeling. Because of this experience the person claims salvation and is certain that it was the work of the Spirit that caused it all to happen.

There are some problems with this approach. First, as we study cases of conversion in the New Testament, we find not a single case of an individual who was saved through such an experience. In cases where individuals actually had supernatural "experiences," they still had to hear the Word and obey its commands. (Saul - Acts 9; Cornelius - Acts 10; the Jailer - Acts 16, etc.)

Also, we are puzzled by the fact that various individuals who claim to have experienced this confirmation of the Spirit have differing views on fundamental doctrinal issues. We wonder how that could be if they are truly receiving some action directly from the Holy Spirit. Do you see the problem?

So, how does the Spirit "bear witness with our spirit that we are the children of God?" How can we have this confidence and confirmation of the Spirit?

The Holy Spirit through inspiration produced the written word of God. When we compare our lives with that perfect revelation, we are able to see if we have done those things that are commanded in order to be a child of God. Have you believed (Heb. 11:6), repented of sins (Lk. 13:3), confessed faith in Christ (Rom. 10:10), and been baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38)? Do you continue to faithfully serve the Lord (Rev. 2:10)? If so, the Spirit "bears witness" through the Scriptures that you are a child of God.