

David's Mighty Men and Loyal Followers

1 Chronicles 12

1 Chronicles 12:1-2 - *"Now these were the men who came to David at Ziklag while he was still a fugitive from Saul, the son of Kish; and they were among the mighty men, helpers in the war, ² armed with bows, using both the right hand and the left in hurling stones and shooting arrows with the bow. They were of Benjamin, Saul's brethren."*

In **verses 3-7** some names of the warriors from the tribe of Benjamin are given.

Verse 8, *"Some Gadites joined David at the stronghold in the wilderness, mighty men of valor, men trained for battle, who could handle shield and spear, whose faces were like the faces of lions, and were as swift as gazelles on the mountains."*

Then in **verses 9-13**, the names of some of the mighty men of valor from the tribe of Gad are listed.

"These were from the sons of Gad, captains of the army; the least was over a hundred, and the greatest was over a thousand. These are the ones who crossed the Jordan in the first month, when it had overflowed all its banks; and they put to flight all those in the valleys, to the east and to the west.

¹⁶ Then some of the sons of Benjamin and Judah came to David at the stronghold. ¹⁷ And David went out to meet them, and answered and said to them, "If you have come peaceably to me to help me, my heart will be united with you; but if to betray me to my enemies, since there is no wrong in my hands, may the God of our fathers look and bring judgment."¹⁸ Then the Spirit came upon Amasai, chief of the captains, and he said: 'We are yours, O David. We are on your side, O son of Jesse! Peace, peace to you, and peace to your helpers! For your God helps you.'

So David received them, and made them captains of the troop.

¹⁹ And some from Manasseh defected to David when he was going with the Philistines to battle against Saul; but they did not help them, for the lords of the Philistines sent him away by agreement, saying, 'He may defect to his master Saul and endanger our heads.'²⁰ When he went to Ziklag, those of Manasseh who defected to him were Adnah, Jozabad, Jedaiel, Michael, Jozabad, Elihu, and Zillethai, captains of the thousands who were from Manasseh. ²¹ And they helped David against the bands of raiders, for they were mighty men of valor, and they were captains in the army. ²² For at that time they came to David day by day to help him, until it was a great army, like the army of God" (v14-22).

From **verses 23-40**, the numbers of men from the various tribes that joined David at Hebron are given. *"These were the numbers of the divisions that were equipped for war, that came to David at Hebron to turn over the kingdom of Saul to him, according to the word of the Lord. ²⁴ Of the sons of Judah bearing shield and spear, six thousand eight hundred armed for war; ²⁵ of the sons of Simeon, mighty men of valor fit for war, seven thousand one hundred; ²⁶ of the sons of Levi four thousand six hundred; ²⁷ Jehoiada, the leader of the Aaronites, and with him three thousand seven hundred; ²⁸ Zadok, a young man, a valiant warrior, and from his father's house twenty-two captains; ²⁹ of the sons of Benjamin, relatives of Saul, three thousand (until then, the greatest part of them had remained loyal to the house of Saul); ³⁰ of the sons of Ephraim twenty thousand eight hundred, mighty men of valor, famous men throughout their father's house; ³¹ of the half-tribe of Manasseh eighteen thousand, who were designated by name to come and make David king; ³² of the sons of Issachar who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do, their chiefs were two hundred; and all their brethren were at their command; ³³ of Zebulun there were fifty thousand who went out to battle,*

expert in war with all weapons of war, stouthearted men who could keep ranks; ³⁴ of Naphtali one thousand captains, and with them thirty-seven thousand with shield and spear; ³⁵ of the Danites who could keep battle formation, twenty-eight thousand six hundred; ³⁶ of Asher, those who could go out to war, able to keep battle formation, forty thousand; ³⁷ of the Reubenites and Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh, from the other side of the Jordan, one hundred and twenty thousand armed for battle with every kind of weapon of war.

³⁸ All these men of war, who could keep ranks, came to Hebron with a loyal heart, to make David king over all Israel; and all the rest of Israel were of one mind to make David king. ³⁹ And they were there with David three days, eating and drinking, for their brethren had prepared for them. ⁴⁰ Moreover those who were near to them, from as far away as Issachar and Zebulun and Naphtali, brought food on donkeys and camels, on mules and oxen - provisions of flour, and cakes of figs, and cakes of raisins; wine and oil, and oxen and sheep abundantly, for there was joy in Israel.”

Background Notes

In 1 Chronicles 11, a number of David's mighty men are listed as individuals. The listing of mighty men and loyal followers in chapter 12 refers primarily to the units from all twelve tribes that joined David, along with the military leaders.

Men from the tribe of Benjamin, King Saul's own tribe, joined David at Ziklag (v1-7), when David was still escaping when King Saul wanted to kill him. Those from the tribe of Gad on the east side of the Jordan River crossed the Jordan at flood time to join David, while he was still defending himself in the wilderness (v8-15).

Why did David question the loyalty of some of the Benjamin and Judah (v16-18)? Back in 1 Samuel 23, the men of Keilah and the Ziphites from the tribal area of Judah betrayed David when he was hiding in the wilderness.

In verses 19-21, those from the tribe of Manasseh who defected to David while he was at Ziklag are given.

Even before David was made king over Judah at Hebron, he already had a great army at Ziklag: *“For at that time they came to David day by day to help him, until it was a great army, like the army of God”* (v22). What a great description!

From verse 23-40, we have the numbers of mighty men of valor from the various tribes who came to join David at Hebron. Remember, David reigned over Judah from Hebron for 7 1/2 years before he became king over all Israel. In total, he reigned for 33 years.

Doctrinal Point

The detailed descriptions of David's mighty men contain spiritual lessons for committed Christians.

Romans 15:4 - *“For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.”*

In our studies in the life and times of David, we’ve mentioned more than once that David’s mighty men of valor give us spiritual pictures of mighty Christians. As these men were courageous, loyal and committed servants of King David, so we should be courageous, loyal and committed to our King, the Lord Jesus Christ. In chapter 12 we see this truth once again, especially in some of the details about David’s mighty men. Let’s look at some of these spiritual lessons.

1. Committed Christians are trained.

“Some men of Gad joined David at the stronghold in the wilderness, mighty men of valor, men trained for battle, who could handle shield and spear” (v8).

Are you a committed Christian and ready for spiritual battle? Your weapon is the sword of the Spirit - the Word of God (Ephesians 6:17). Are you trained in the use of your sword? Can you use your Bible to lead someone to Christ? Can you defend the faith, using Scriptures?

2 Timothy 2:15 says, *“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”* We should be ashamed if we can’t handle the Bible as a tool and as a sword. You don’t have to go to seminary to be trained, but you do have to be diligent about systematic study of the Word of God.

Committed Christians are trained.

2. Committed Christians are courageous.

David’s mighty men of valor had faces like the faces of lions (v8). Their courage and determination was visible in their faces. We too should be strong in the faith, bold to witness for Christ and to stand up for biblical truth and values.

Committed Christians are courageous.

3. Committed Christians are filled with the Spirit.

“Then the Spirit came upon Amasai, chief of the captains, and he said: “We are yours, O David. We are on your side, O son of Jesse! Peace, peace to you, and peace to your helpers! For your God helps you” (v18).

When we are filled with the Spirit, we too will praise the Lord Jesus, the greater Son of David by saying, *“We are yours, O Lord.”* In the Old Testament the Spirit of God came upon different individuals at different times for different purposes, but with the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit indwells every Christian. When we trust Christ as Savior, we are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise (Ephesians 1:13).

The Holy Spirit **indwells** all believers, but Christians are not **filled** with the Spirit unless they’re living under the control of the Spirit. **All** believers are to be **filled** with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). In the context of Ephesians 5:18, Spirit-filled believers are Bible-filled believers and praise-filled believers. They’re believers who submit to God’s authority structures. Committed Christians are filled with the Spirit.

4. Committed Christians understand the times.

“From Issachar, men who understood the times and knew what Israel should do” (v32).

The 200 leaders from the tribe of Issachar understood the signs of the times, and as a result they had the knowledge and judgment necessary for making key decisions for the course of the nation (v32). Christians should be aware of what’s happening politically, philosophically, and socially – nationally, internationally, and on the local level, including the area of education. How can we be the salt of the earth and the light of the world if we don’t know what’s going on?

Committed Christians understand the times.

5. Committed Christians have an undivided hearts.

“From the tribe of Zebulun... 50,000 skilled warriors, who were fully armed and prepared for battle, and completely loyal to David” (v33).

The men of Zebulun served David with undivided hearts! They were completely loyal! What a great compliment!

What about us? Do we serve the Lord with an undivided heart? Or is part of our heart located in our investments and material possessions, or entangled in an ungodly relationship? Committed Christians have undivided hearts. The details of David’s mighty men contain spiritual lessons for committed Christians.

Practical Application

Get ready for the banquet!

At the end of 1 Chronicles 12 there’s a wonderful description of the celebration at David’s coronation. *“And they were there with David three days, eating and drinking, for their brethren had prepared for them. Moreover those who were near to them, from as far away as Issachar and Zebulun and Naphtali, brought food on donkeys and camels, on mules and oxen—provisions of flour, and cakes of figs, and cakes of raisins, wine and oil, and oxen and sheep abundantly, for there was joy in Israel.”*

What a great prophetic picture of the time when our Lord Jesus will return to earth, and will be recognized by all as the rightful King! Then all believers will take part in that glorious celebration and coronation.

So, believers - **get ready for the banquet!**