

The “Last Words of David” and the Deeds of Three of His Mighty Men

2 Samuel 23:1-12

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“Now these are the last words of David.

*Thus says David the son of Jesse; Thus says the man raised up on high,
The anointed of the God of Jacob, And the sweet psalmist of Israel:*

²*“The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me, And His word was on my tongue.*

³*The God of Israel said, The Rock of Israel spoke to me:*

‘He who rules over men must be just, Ruling in the fear of God.

⁴*And he shall be like the light of the morning when the sun rises, A morning without clouds,
Like the tender grass springing out of the earth, By clear shining after rain.’*

⁵*“Although my house is not so with God, Yet He has made with me an everlasting covenant,
Ordered in all things and secure. For this is all my salvation and all my desire;*

Will He not make it increase? ⁶But the sons of rebellion shall all be as thorns thrust away,

Because they cannot be taken with hands. ⁷But the man who touches them

Must be armed with iron and the shaft of a spear, And they shall be utterly burned with fire in their place.”

⁸*These are the names of the mighty men whom David had: Josheb-Basshebeth the Tachmonite, chief among the captains. He was called Adino the Eznite, because he had killed eight hundred men at one time. ⁹And after him was Eleazar the son of Dodo, the Ahohite, one of the three mighty men with David when they defied the Philistines who were gathered there for battle, and the men of Israel had retreated. ¹⁰He arose and attacked the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand stuck to the sword. The LORD brought about a great victory that day; and the people returned after him only to plunder. ¹¹And after him was Shammah the son of Agee the Hararite. The Philistines had gathered together into a troop where there was a piece of ground full of lentils. So the people fled from the Philistines. ¹²But he stationed himself in the middle of the field, defended it, and killed the Philistines. So the LORD brought about a great victory.”*

Background Notes

Verse 1 says that these are “the last words of David.” Does this mean that after uttering these words, he never spoke another word – and he died immediately after saying them? No, these are the last *formal* words of David. Most translations format the first seven verses of 2 Samuel 23 to show they were written as Hebrew poetry. It is a poem or song of praise to the Lord. In this poem, David praised the Lord for His righteousness and His everlasting covenant.

Furthermore, this psalm of praise is prophetic; it looks beyond David and his experiences to the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, as we see in many of David's psalms.

In verses 3-4, David said that the Lord told him the King who rules over men righteously "*shall be like the light of the morning when the sun rises, a morning without clouds; like the tender grass springing out of the earth, clear shining after rain.*" What a wonderful description of the happy conditions when there is righteous rule - whether those who "rule" are kings, or government officials, or church leaders, or parents!

In verse 5 David acknowledged that he fell far short of the ideal righteous ruler, but God had made an everlasting covenant with him. That covenant included the promise of a coming righteous ruler, the Messiah, who would be in the family line of David. We saw that covenant back in 2 Samuel 7, where God promised not only blessings and prosperity under Solomon's reign, but blessing and prosperity for the enduring Davidic dynasty and the coming Messiah, who would be the perfect righteous ruler. As Psalm 72:6-7: "*He shall come down like rain upon the grass before mowing, like showers that water the earth. In His days the righteous shall flourish, and abundance of peace, until the moon is no more.*" All this blessing of the Lord's future earthly kingdom is predicted and affirmed here in David's psalm of praise.

Besides the promise of blessing and prosperity of Christ's coming kingdom, verses 6-7 predict that there will be judgment upon godless and rebellious people, and upon those who oppose the Messiah, His people, and His kingdom. The New Testament confirms this prediction of judgment upon the ungodly at the end of the future Tribulation period, at the setting up of Christ's earthly kingdom. In Matthew 13 the Lord predicted this judgment in His parable of the wheat and the tares (weeds). Matthew 13:40-43: "*Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!*"

Doctrinal Points

1. The words of David's pen convey inspired words of Scripture.

The author of one of the commentaries I read on this psalm gave a nice alliterated outline of David's words about himself in verse 1:

- As to his *person*, he was the son of Jesse.
- As to his *position*, he was the man whom the Lord raised on high.
- As to his *power*, he was anointed by the God of Jacob.
- As to his *practice*, he was the sweet psalmist of Israel.

In verse 2 David made a claim about his words: "*The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue.*" Here David made the claim that God spoke through him - that when David spoke or wrote the words of the Lord, the Spirit

of God was guiding and controlling what he said and wrote. This is quite a claim, isn't it? We couldn't make such a claim for ourselves, could we? David here affirmed the divine inspiration of his writings.

Divine inspiration is the process by which God superintended the writers and writings of Scripture. As to the writers, 2 Peter 1:21 says, "*for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.*" And as to the writings, 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, "*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness...*" As a spokesman for the Lord, David claimed divine inspiration for his words and writings. The words of David's pen convey inspired words of Scripture.

2. The deeds of David's men portray insightful lessons from Scripture.

In our talks from 1 & 2 Samuel, we've mentioned a number of times in which, as king, David is a "type" or a spiritual picture of Jesus Christ as our King. It stands to reason, then, that David's mighty men are pictures or illustrations of believers who are willing to serve the Lord our King courageously and sacrificially. In 2 Samuel 23, thirty-seven mighty men of David are listed for their achievements on behalf of David their king. Verses 8-12 tell us of the achievements of three of David's mighty men. I'm reading some excerpts from an issue of "*Devotions for Growing Christians*" that I wrote some time ago, entitled *David's Mighty Men*:

"The fact that God keeps a detailed record of the names and exploits of David's fighting men is significant. It is an indication that God records *our* personal service, too. If God kept track of the feats of David's valiant soldiers and applauded them by name, how much more will he keep track and reward the faithful servants of David's greater Son! Other Christians may not be aware of your behind-the-scenes service for Christ, but God sees and knows you as an individual soldier, and He will reward every act of faithful service.

"Spiritual lessons can be found in the various acts of service of David's mighty men, and this is another reason for a listing of their names. In many ways King David portrays the coming Son of David, our Lord Jesus Christ. It was during David's time of rejection that he particularly pictures Christ. David was the anointed and rightful king, but was unrecognized, and was rejected by King Saul and the establishment. In the same way, Jesus Christ is the rightful king over mankind right now, but He is unrecognized and rejected by this world.

"Those who recognized David as king had to be willing to join him in the wilderness, and share in his unpopularity and rejection. In the same way, we who have recognized the Lord Jesus as King have joined Him "*outside the camp, bearing His reproach*" (Hebrews 13:13). Certainly we can identify in a spiritual way with those people who joined David in the wilderness—people in distress, people in need, and people who were dissatisfied with the established system. Out of that motley bunch of people, David's mighty men emerged. Their heroic feats portray the activities of believers who have made Christ their King. Although we should not be dogmatic when it comes to "seeing spiritual pictures" in this text, it appears that there are some solid lessons here that can help us in our growth as Christians.

"With this in mind, then, it is very easy to see that the actions of David's mighty men on the battlefield contain lessons for us about spiritual warfare.

- Josheb-Basshebeth (v8) and Abishai (v18-19) overcame great odds – and so can we!

- Eleazar (vs9-10) stood and fought the enemy even though his fellow soldiers had retreated. Even though he was at the point of exhaustion, he would not rest until the Lord brought victory—great victory. Spiritual warfare is very draining at times. Even though others may throw in the towel, great victory comes to Christians who hang tough and don't give up. Galatians 6:9 says, “*And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.*”

- Shammah (vs11-12) defended the position and provision of the Lord's people. The Lord is looking for the Shammahs of today who will defend the faith and be willing to go to “battle for the Bible.” In Jude 3 we are exhorted to “contend earnestly for the faith.”

To read this entire essay, click: <http://www.growingchristians.org/dfgc/mighty.html>

The deeds of David's men portray insightful lessons from Scripture.

Practical Application

Are you listed with the mighty ones?

Every man who joined David in the wilderness entered into David's kingdom, but relatively few made the list of David's mighty men. The practical application is obvious. Every Christian is included in the kingdom of Christ - but sadly, some Christians will not be included in the Lord's list of “mighty ones.” When the rewards are given out at the judgment seat of Christ, the believers who have been willing to serve the King with courage and loyal devotion - even in times of difficulty, persecution and rejection - will stand out as the Lord's mighty ones. Are you listed with the mighty ones?