

The Valiant Deeds of More of David's Mighty Men

2 Samuel 23:13-39

2 Samuel 23:13-39 - *"Then three of the thirty chief men went down at harvest time and came to David at the cave of Adullam. And the troop of Philistines encamped in the Valley of Rephaim. ¹⁴ David was then in the stronghold, and the garrison of the Philistines was then in Bethlehem. ¹⁵ And David said with longing, "Oh, that someone would give me a drink of the water from the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!" ¹⁶ So the three mighty men broke through the camp of the Philistines, drew water from the well of Bethlehem that was by the gate, and took it and brought it to David. Nevertheless he would not drink it, but poured it out to the LORD. ¹⁷ And he said, "Far be it from me, O LORD, that I should do this! Is this not the blood of the men who went in jeopardy of their lives?" Therefore he would not drink it. These things were done by the three mighty men.*

¹⁸ Now Abishai the brother of Joab, the son of Zeruiah, was chief of another three. He lifted his spear against three hundred men, killed them, and won a name among these three. ¹⁹ Was he not the most honored of three? Therefore he became their captain. However, he did not attain to the first three.

²⁰ Benaiah was the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man from Kabzeel, who had done many deeds. He had killed two lion-like heroes of Moab. He also had gone down and killed a lion in the midst of a pit on a snowy day. ²¹ And he killed an Egyptian, a spectacular man. The Egyptian had a spear in his hand; so he went down to him with a staff, wrested the spear out of the Egyptian's hand, and killed him with his own spear. ²² These things Benaiah the son of Jehoiada did, and won a name among three mighty men. ²³ He was more honored than the thirty, but he did not attain to the first three. And David appointed him over his guard.

²⁴ Asahel the brother of Joab was one of the thirty; Elhanan the son of Dodo of Bethlehem, ²⁵ Shammah the Harodite, Elika the Harodite, ²⁶ Helez the Paltite, Ira the son of Ikkesh the Tekoite, ²⁷ Abiezer the Anathothite, Mebunnai the Hushathite, ²⁸ Zalmon the Ahohite, Maharai the Netophathite, ²⁹ Heleb the son of Baanah (the Netophathite), Ittai the son of Ribai from Gibeah of the children of Benjamin, ³⁰ Benaiah a Pirathonite, Hiddai from the brooks of Gaash, ³¹ Abi-Albon the Arbathite, Azmaveth the Barhumite, ³² Eliahba the Shaalbonite (of the sons of Jashen), Jonathan, ³³ Shammah the Hararite, Ahiam the son of Sharar the Hararite, ³⁴ Eliphelet the son of Ahasbai, the son of the Maachathite, EIAM the son of Ahithophel the Gilonite, ³⁵ Hezrai the Carmelite, Paarai the Arbite, ³⁶ Igal the son of Nathan of Zobah, Bani the Gadite, ³⁷ Zelek the Ammonite, Naharai the Beerothite (armorbearer of Joab the son of Zeruiah), ³⁸ Ira the Ithrite, Gareb the Ithrite, ³⁹ and Uriah the Hittite: thirty-seven in all."

Background Notes

Thirty-seven men were listed as David's "Mighty Men." For the sake of time, for some further background I'm reading from an essay that I wrote some years ago entitled "*David's Mighty Men*":

"Reading through a list of names in a Scripture passage can be somewhat boring. Did you ever get a "devotional high" from reading a biblical genealogy? Why did God include such seemingly dry and barren lists of names in the Bible?

Several historical, doctrinal and practical reasons could be given, but we probably would still fall short of the full answer to this question. However, we can be sure that every catalog of names in Scripture is there for a purpose. The Holy Spirit did not waste words. He did not inspire the biblical writers to include “filler” to beef up the length of the Bible!

In 2 Samuel 23 we have the roster of David's mighty men. This list of names is also included in 1 Chronicles 11. These are the men who joined David in his time of rejection, before he came to the throne as king over Israel. After David was anointed king by the prophet Samuel, there was a period of time before he was crowned king. During this period there were times when he had to hide in the wilderness to escape from King Saul, who was fiercely jealous because David had become an overnight celebrity and favorite son in Israel after he had killed the Philistine giant, Goliath. Although Saul had already been set aside by God as the rightful king of Israel, he had not yet been removed from the throne. During this time, when David was in disfavor with the establishment, many people joined him in the wilderness and became his army of loyal supporters. We read in 1 Samuel 22:2 that *“all those who were in distress or in debt or discontented gathered around David, and he became their leader. About four hundred men were with him.”* Some of these loyal followers of David accomplished great things on David's behalf, and they are registered as David's “mighty men” in 2 Samuel 23.

Again we ask: “Why did the Holy Spirit record these names for us?” Romans 15:4 says that *“everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.”* What teaching and encouragement can we gain from this list of David's mighty men?

One reason that the roster of David's soldiers is recorded is that it authenticates the historicity of the Bible account. Destructive critics of the Bible seem to delight in saying that the Old Testament stories are merely exaggerated legends of Jewish folk heroes. But lists of names associated with Old Testament characters like Abraham and Moses and David make it harder for the skeptic to classify these individuals as part of Jewish folklore. The name lists authenticate the Old Testament characters as real people who actually lived in history. We should thank the Lord for ‘boring’ lists of names because they limit the destructive criticism of the Bible!”

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

Doctrinal Points

1. Spiritual worship involves love, courage, and sacrifice.

All the deeds of David's mighty men have spiritual lessons for the believer today. As God kept records of the valiant acts of David's men for their king, so God keeps a record of the valiant, courageous and sacrificial deeds of Christian service that we do, out of loyal love for our King, the greater Son of David, the Lord Jesus Christ. Once again, I'm reading some further excerpts from my essay entitled *“David's Mighty Men.”*

“A beautiful picture of worship is recorded in the actions of the three mighty men of verses 15-17. David longed for a refreshing drink from the well of his hometown, Bethlehem. The mighty three overcame the enemy and brought the water to David at great personal risk and in spite of overwhelming obstacles. They were not commanded to perform this deed. It was not a military duty. They acted out of love for their king.

“Similarly, our worship of the Lord should not be performed as a duty, but as an act of devotion because we love our King. True worship will involve time, effort and sacrifice. It will sometimes involve overcoming great barriers that are thrown in

our path by the enemy of our souls. Have you ever noticed how many obstacles and diversions seem to present themselves when you would like to spend some time worshiping the Lord? Sometimes the man-made barriers of tradition and ritual must be overcome.

The fact that David poured the water out on the ground makes it seem like the brave exploit of the mighty three was simply a wasteful effort. But David considered their act to be so significant that he honored it! He “elevated” their act of devotion by giving the water as a “drink offering” to the Lord. Our times of quiet meditation in worship of the Lord may appear to some people as a waste of time and effort. After all, thanking and praising the Lord doesn't feed any hungry people or provide any care for the homeless. But from God's perspective, both our active worship and our quiet worship have great value. Our worship brings refreshment to the heart of our King.”

Spiritual worship involves love, courage, and sacrifice.

2. Spiritual warfare involves the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Verses 20-21: “Benaiah was the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man from Kabzeel, who had done many deeds. He had killed two lion-like heroes of Moab. He also had gone down and killed a lion in the midst of a pit on a snowy day.²¹ And he killed an Egyptian, a spectacular man. The Egyptian had a spear in his hand; so he went down to him with a staff, wrested the spear out of the Egyptian's hand, and killed him with his own spear.

Let's return to the essay entitled “David's Mighty Men”:

“Benaiah, another of David's mighty men, went on to become the commander-in-chief of all Israeli forces under King Solomon (1 Kings 4:4). Three of Benaiah's heroic achievements are mentioned in verses 20-21. As we consider our spiritual warfare, these three feats may be a portrayal of the believer's struggle against the world, the flesh and the devil.

“In 1 Peter 5:8 Satan is pictured as a lion: *“Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”* Benaiah *“went down and killed a lion in the middle of a pit on a snowy day.”* Notice this action was offensive—the kind of action we are to wage against the attacks of Satan. Benaiah was not caught off guard, but took the offensive and went down into the pit. He killed the lion in the middle of the pit—not while he was backed into a corner! Are we courageous like Benaiah - or are we running scared? Remember – in Ephesians 6:13-17, there is no armor to cover the back of the Christian soldier! We are commanded to “resist the devil” and we are promised that he will “flee from us” (James 4:7).

“Benaiah also showed his might by overcoming “two of Moab's best men.” The Moabites were physically related to Israel, and yet they were enemies. As closely related, yet an enemy of Israel, they seem to portray “the flesh,” in terms of our spiritual warfare. The “flesh” is the sinful fallen human nature that we all possess. (See Romans 7:15-25.) While the flesh is “closely related” to every one of us, it is our deadly enemy and must be overcome if we are to become mighty believers. (See Galatians 5:16-17.) To be even more specific, we could look at the Moabites as representative of the flesh when it is not under control. Do you remember the origin of the Moabites? This nation came from an incestuous relationship between Lot and one of his daughters - the flesh not under control! (See Genesis 19)

“As Benaiah showed no mercy to the Moabites, we must show no mercy in overcoming the flesh; it must be held in check at all costs. Colossians 3:5 “Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.”

“Finally, Benaiah showed his might by killing an impressive Egyptian (v21). Egypt was an enemy of Israel, and in our picture of spiritual warfare Egypt represents the world. As God redeemed His people out of Egypt, so God has redeemed us out of this world. After the Exodus, one of Israel's major problems was that they were still attracted to Egypt. They craved many of the things that they remembered from living in Egypt, and sometimes they even wanted to go back to Egypt! We cannot deny that the world sometimes attracts us, just as thoughts of Egypt attracted the Israeli people in the wilderness. And we must admit that the world at times looks as impressive to us as the Egyptian looked to Benaiah.

“We must always keep in mind that the world's value system is opposed to biblical values, and we cannot allow the thought-processes and lifestyles of the world to infiltrate our thinking and actions as Christians. It is interesting to notice, however, that Benaiah used the Egyptian's own spear to defeat him! This may also be part of the spiritual picture. Christians should take every opportunity to use the material things of this world to fight against the world system. For example, Christians should grab the spear of technology of movies and TV and the internet, which have been developed primarily to serve the worldly value system (1 John 2:16), but should be used by Christians for the glory of God in overcoming the world and promoting the kingdom of Christ! Benaiah did not hesitate to exchange his out-dated and old-fashioned club for a more technologically advanced (and far more effective) spear!” Spiritual warfare involves the world, the flesh and the devil.”

Practical Application

Be more than a Joab!

In our studies of 2 Samuel, we've seen that Joab was a brave and courageous military commander in David's army. Joab was the key to David's capture of Jerusalem because of his brave act of climbing up the water shaft to get behind enemy lines. Joab effectively commanded David's army - but Joab is not listed as one of David's mighty men. His name is mentioned in verses 18 and 24, but he is not listed among the 37. Why not? Answer: Because Joab didn't please the heart of David. He fought for David, but he didn't always obey David. He killed Absalom, David's rebellious son - against David's orders. He killed Abner and Amasa - not in line with David's orders. In 1 Kings 1, we see that Joab supported Adonijah for king instead of David's choice. Solomon.

Joab was brave and courageous, but he was a self-seeking individual. Joab was out for the advancement of Joab. As a result, Joab didn't make David's list of mighty men. Think about it. Am I on our Lord's list of mighty ones? Do I make it my goal to be pleasing to my King (2 Corinthians 5:9)? In my courageous and valiant deeds of Christian service, is the Lord Number One, or am I selfishly working to make myself Number One? Be more than a Joab!