

Title: Zeal without Armor

Text: 2 Sam 2: 18-24

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King Saul is dead. David is now King in Hebron over the house of Judah. But Saul's general, Abner, set up Saul's son, Ishbosheth as king. He ordered the tribes of Israel to bow to Ishbosheth rather than David. Joab is David's general. Abner comes with his soldiers to Gibeon. Joab is with his soldiers. Abner said, "*Let the young men now arise and play before us.*" It was some sort of sport. But it was a trick. Abner's men lay hold of Joab's men and they almost all killed each other. But David's servants defeat Abner's men. So Abner flees.

2 Samuel 2: 18: And there were three sons of Zeruiah there Joab and Abishai and Asahel.

Zeruiah was David's sister. These were her sons, David's nephews. Joab is David's general. Abishai is the one who volunteered to sneak into Saul's camp with David, ; he begged David to let him slay Saul but David would not (1 Sam 26: 6-9) Abishai is the one who wanted to "take Shemeai's head off." But again David would not let him. (2 Sam 16: 10-11). Asahel is the one this story is about.

2 Samuel 2: 18...and Asahel was as light of foot as a wild roe. [he could run as fast as a wild deer] 19: And Asahel pursued after Abner; and in going he turned not to the right hand nor to the left from following Abner.

Asahel was young and fast on his feet. He was set on capturing or killing Abner. Asahel was zealous to do this on his own

2 Samuel 2: 20: Then Abner looked behind him, and said, *Art thou Asahel? And he answered, I am.* 21: And Abner said to him, Turn thee aside to thy right hand or to thy left, and lay thee hold on one of the young men, and take thee his armour. But Asahel would not turn aside from following of him. 22: And Abner said again to Asahel, Turn thee aside from following me: wherefore should I smite thee to the ground? how then should I hold up my face to Joab thy brother?

Abner was an older, experienced general. He tried to persuade Asahel to take the armor of one of the young men. Abner did not want to slay Asahel: Abner warned the young man twice to turn aside from following him.

2 Samuel 2: 23: Howbeit he refused to turn aside: wherefore Abner with the hinder end of the spear smote him under the fifth rib, that the spear came out behind him; and he fell down there, and died in the same place:

Asahel had too much pride and too much zeal to turn aside. As he drew closer, the old, seasoned general stuck his spear out behind him and speared Asahel under the fifth rib—through his liver—out his back. Asahel fell down and died

2 Samuel 2: 23...and it came to pass, that as many as came to the place where Asahel fell down and died stood still.

Subject: Zeal without Armor

Divisions: 1) Asahel's zeal 2) The work of grace for us 3) The work of grace in us

ZEAL WITHOUT ARMOR

Asahel gives us an example of us. By our first birth—due to our sin-nature—every sinner is like Asahel. Due to our sin-nature, God's saint need to be on guard so as not to err like he. Asahel had confidence in his ability to overtake Abner and conquer him. He was full of pride. Asahel could envision himself getting the praise for capturing or killing Abner.

2 Samuel 2: 19...in going he turned not to the right hand nor to the left from following Abner..21 :And Abner said to him, Turn thee aside to thy right hand or to thy left, and lay thee hold on one of the young men, and take thee his armour. But Asahel would not turn aside from following of him.

When we see words repeated in scripture, it is a signal to pay attention. If Asahel was familiar with God's word—and with the history of his family—perhaps hearing those words made him think of the Lord's word to Joshua.

Joshua 1: 5: There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee....7: Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest.

But until the Spirit of God makes us understand what it means to turn not from the law, we will do as Asahel. We will run and run thinking we can overtake the law, thinking we can conquer our sin and establish ourselves in righteousness. We want that glory.

Brethren, Christ is typified in Joshua. Christ alone did all the law. He alone turned not to the right hand or the left. Christ prospered in fulfilling all righteousness and redeeming his people from the curse of the law. When God gives us knowledge to hear the law then we understand that the way we do all the law is by believing on Christ.

But until Christ gives us an understanding, due to our pride and self-confidence, we are like Asahel, full of zeal without knowledge.

Romans 10: 1: Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. 2: For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. 3: For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. 4: For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. 5: For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them. 6: But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise,...8...The word is nigh thee, *even* in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; 9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

The Pharisees were full of zeal to overtake the law like Asahel thought he could overtake Abner. But it was zeal without knowledge: they were ignorant that the law is like an old general—easily able to smite us to death. We were ignorant that Christ is the righteousness of God, that Christ is the end purpose for which God gave the law. Like Asahel was too proud to admit he needed the armor of another. Yes, we run the race set before us but...

Ecclesiastes 9:11...the race *is* not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill

In sanctification, God makes us look to Christ alone. He grows us in the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Righteousness. Asahel was trying to establish himself in the kingdom of David by conquering Abner himself. Sinners are running to fulfill the law, running to establish themselves in the kingdom of God but not submitting to Christ our Righteousness.

ZEAL WITH ARMOR—THE WORK OF GRACE *FOR* US

Unlike Asahel, Christ is Wisdom. As the righteous servant of God, representing God's elect, Christ was full of zeal. But he was wise to put on armor.

Isaiah 59: 16: And he saw that *there was* no man, and wondered that *there was* no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him. 17: For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance *for* clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloke.

Asahel's name means "*God made.*" God made his Son a body and Christ took flesh and humbled himself to become the righteous servant of God for his people.

But the Lord Jesus was clothed in armor—he put *on righteousness as a breastplate*. We do not put on righteousness the same way Christ did. He fulfilled the law by his works. We put on righteousness through faith in Christ. God robes us in the armor of Christ's righteousness.

Christ put on *an helmet of salvation upon his head*. When satan fired his arrows, Christ looked to the Father in perfect faith trusting the Father to fulfill his covenant made to him and be his Strength. We are made to look to Christ our Strength!

Christ *put on the garments of vengeance for clothing*. Christ vindicated his people from all charges made against us. He crushed the devil's head and took away all power by putting away our sin and making us righteous in him. We do not take vengeance but we trust the Lord Jesus to work.

Our Savior *was clad with zeal as a cloke*. His zeal was unlike Asahel and the Pharisees, his zeal was in perfect Wisdom and Power for the glory of God his Father and for the salvation of his people, not merely for self

Isaiah 9:7: Of the increase of *his* government and peace *there shall be* no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

2 Kings 19:31: For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape out of mount Zion: the zeal of the LORD *of hosts* shall do this.

ZEAL WITH ARMOR—THE WORK OF GRACE *IN* US

The Spirit of God makes us stand still and cease from our vain works, by bringing us to behold Christ on the cross

2 Samuel 2: 23: It came to pass, *that* as many as came to the place where Asahel fell down and died stood still.

John 17: 1 [Christ prayed] Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: 2: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. 3: And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. 4: I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.

Christ was not killed as Asahel. The Lord Jesus laid down his life in obedience to the Father. He submitted to bear the sin and curse of the law for his people. *As many as the Father gave to Christ* shall be brought to this place, to behold how Christ lay down his life. We are going to be brought to the place where we see the spear of the law has already pierced our Substitute in the room and stead of his people.

We were running trying to overcome the law. But beholding Christ has finished the work, beholding Christ is the Righteousness of God, then we stand still—*It came to pass, that as many as came to the place where Christ [laid] down [his life] and died, stood still.*

Hebrew 9:14: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

We stop running and stand still by believing on Christ...

Romans 9:16...*it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.*

We are made to hear the law speak what Abner spoke to Asahel in verses 21-22. The law says to us, "*Turn thee aside...and lay thee hold of ONE...take thee his armor...turn thee aside from following me: wherefore should I smite thee to the ground?*" The Holy Spirit makes us hear the law declare us guilty.

Galatians 3:24: Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster *to bring us* unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. 25: But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

By renewing our minds, the Spirit turns us to Christ. He keeps speaking this command throughout the life of faith. The Spirit commands us to put on Christ through faith. Everything said here about this armor is to believe on Christ. The Holy Spirit commands us,

Ephesians 6: 10:...be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. 11: Put on the whole armor 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.

Christ said, "*I am the Truth.*" Look to Christ.

Ephesians 6: 14:...and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

The breastplate of righteousness is Christ our Righteousness; knowing his righteousness is ours through faith, "*be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.*"

Ephesians 6: 15: And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

The Psalmist said in Psalm 40:2 He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.

Ephesians 6: 16: Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

Faith trusts Christ to quench the fiery darts of the wicked.

Ephesians 6: 17: And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

Be in God's word, be under the preaching of the gospel, be looking to Christ.

Ephesians 6: 18: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

We always depend upon Christ alone to save so we pray to him always.

But Asahel thought he had power and wisdom in himself. He was confident in his own strength. He wanted the glory. But from the day the Spirit gives us faith, the Lord teaches us.

1 Corinthians 1: 29: That no flesh should glory in his presence....31: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

Asahel gloried in his speed. When we start to glory in the gifts Christ has given, the Lord speaks in power into our hearts,

Jeremiah 9: 23: Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise *man* glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty *man* glory in his might, let not the rich *man* glory in his riches: 24: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I *am* the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these *things* I delight, saith the LORD.

He teaches us to console and strengthen our brethren with the same gospel wherewith Christ strengthened us and we trust Christ to work in his servants. The strength is Christ our God.

2 Corinthians 10:4: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but MIGHTY THROUGH GOD to the pulling down of strong holds;)

JOSEPH HART wrote

Gird thy loins up, Christian soldier;
Lo! thy Captain calls thee out;
Let the danger make thee bolder;
War in weakness, dare in doubt.
Buckle on thy heavenly armour;
Patch up no inglorious peace;
Let thy courage wax the warmer,
As thy foes and fears increase.

2 Bind thy golden girdle round thee,
Truth to keep thee firm and tight;
Never shall the foe confound thee,
While the Truth maintains thy fight.
Righteousness within thee rooted
May appear to take thy part;
But let righteousness imputed
Be the breastplate of thy heart.

3 Shod with gospel-preparation,
In the paths of promise tread;
Let the hope of free salvation,
As a helmet, guard thy head.
When beset with various evils,
Wield the Spirit's two-edged sword,
Cut thy way through hosts of devils,
While they fall before the Word.

4 But when dangers closer threaten,
And thy soul draws near to death;
When assaulted sore by Satan,
Then object the shield of faith;
Fiery darts of fierce temptations,
Intercepted by thy God,
There shall lose their force in patience,
Sheathed in love, and quenched in blood.

5 Though to speak thou be not able,
Always pray and never rest;
Prayer's a weapon for the feeble;
Weakest souls can wield it best.
Ever on thy Captain calling,
Make thy worst condition known;
He shall hold thee up when falling,
Or shall lift thee up when down.

Brethren, be zealous for spiritual gifts, be zealous for good works, run the race set before you but be zealous to trust Christ alone to save—run the race looking to Christ alone. When you become weary, remember,

Isaiah 40: 29 He giveth power to the faint; and to *them that have* no might he increaseth strength. 30 Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: 31 But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew *their* strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; *and* they shall walk, and not faint.

Amen!