

## David's Mighty Men

Call to Worship: Psalm 150

1st Scripture: Romans 12

2nd Scripture: 2 Samuel 23:8-39

Hymn #22 (Supp)- *How Great Thou Art*

Hymn #490- *Onward Christian Soldiers*

Hymn #493- *Who is on the Lord's Side?*

### Introduction:

Often times, in Scripture, the Christian life is referred to as a war, indicating that until we get to heaven, we are to be anything but stagnant, careless or casual with our Christian faith. There are higher powers and principalities and demonic hosts in the heavenly places, who are hell bent on destroying us, and keeping us from advancing the Kingdom of Christ. And they utilize many visible, worldly resources to accomplish this end.

It is for this reason that theologians refer to the local and visible church as the "church militant" until she gets home to glory, where she is the "church triumphant." Here, we fight and battle and persevere and endure. There, we rest forever! And so, the whole notion of fighting a war, is very real to us, even though it is a spiritual war, where we contend with enemies, who seek to dismantle our faith, and we war against fleshly lusts, which we are commanded to "put to death by the Spirit." In Ephesians 6:10-20, the Apostle Paul gives us a description of the spiritual armor, which we are to put on, daily, so that we can withstand the attacks of the devil and his minions. And in 2 Timothy 2:3&4, he exhorts Timothy (and us) with these words, "You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier." And at the end of his life, we find the Apostle himself saying, "I have fought the good fight..." Indeed, the Scriptures often refer to the Christian life as a war.

For this reason, it is not unheard of or improper, to see the physical wars of Israel, described throughout the Old Testament, as illustrations, which are meant to depict the spiritual warfare, engaged by the church in the New Covenant. Even as our redemption in Christ and our deliverance from the bondage, power and penalty of sin, is pictured in the Israelite Exodus (from out of the bondage of the Egyptians), our ongoing war against sin, is pictured in the utter

destruction, which Israel was to bring upon the heathen nations, which resided in the Promised Land.

This morning then, as we move on to consider David's mighty men, as listed in our present text, we will do so, with this type of an understanding in mind. And rather than hone in (too much) on any of the specific individuals given here, we will consider the broader picture, given by the whole display, especially since the great majority of the names listed here (vs. 24-39) are just names, with none of their specific feats described for us.

### **I. David's Mighty Men**

When you consider the list of men listed here, you will notice that it is structured in a hierarchy type way, with those who have accomplished the most, obviously given the greater priority over those, who have accomplished the least. Certain groups have attained to greater feats than the others, and although all of these men are greatly respected and noted by David, the order given here, clearly elevates those who were more distinguished than others. That said, all of these men were yet distinguished out of the far larger armies, which made up all of the armies of Israel. And so, simply to be listed here, was a great honor. [III. In our own military, there are various badges and stripes and medals... etc, which are awarded for various achievements and heroic actions - In 2010, Marine Lance Corporal Kyle Carpenter dove on a grenade to save his comrade from certain death in Afghanistan. He received the rare and prestigious "Medal of Honor" for this].

Note then, the structure of this list. First off, again, it is interesting to note, that the man, whom one would think, would have been at the very top of this list, namely, Joab, who was the commander over the entire army of Israel, is not even listed here. I have expressed why I believe this to be the case, in a few previous sermons, so I will not beat that dead horse again here. Just note, that very clearly, his acts of insubordination, and the utter disdain, which David had had for Joab because of this, are likely the reason David had left him out.

Moving down from there then, there were the top three men, who had achieved the most, listed in verses 8-17. Nearly half of this entire section is devoted to speaking about these men. And they were, Adino the Eznite (also known as Jashobeam), who was chief among the captains,

followed by Eleazar the son of Dodo, the Ahohite, and Shammah the son of Agee the Hararite. No one (listed here) had attained to a higher position of accomplishment than these three mighty men. And to give you a flavor of how bold, powerful and useful these men were, each of them is listed with a major; indeed, a supernatural feat that they had accomplished, as individuals and as a group.

Adino, we are told, killed eight hundred men at one time. Eleazar, after the men of Israel had retreated from the Philistines, stood his ground and fought until his hand was weary, and his hand was so tightly clenched around his sword that it literally stuck to his sword-- like it had to be pried off, after the battle! And the Lord gave him the victory, we are told! And finally, Shammah, once again, when the Israelites had fled from the Philistines, stood his ground, defending a field of lentils from the Philistines. He stood in the middle of the field, we are told, defended it, and won the battle! Again, the Lord had given him a great victory on that occasion. And then, we are told of an incident, where these three men, courageously acted together on behalf of King David. David, with a sigh, expressed how much he longed for a drink from the water found in a well at the gate of Bethlehem, where a Philistine garrison was situated. And these men, unbeknownst to David, decided that they would fulfill that desire for David. And so, they went and broke through the camp of the Philistines, drew water from the well of Bethlehem and brought it back to David. When they returned to David, David was so overcome by the risk that these men had taken, that he felt unworthy of the water, which they had risked their lives to attain. And he poured it out before the Lord, refusing to drink it. But, their deed and courage were never forgotten by David. And so, these three mighty men were most noted and honored, above all else.

Next in line, we are given three other mighty men, who did not attain to the level of the first three, but who were higher than the thirty, listed in verses 24-39. In fact, one of these men is also listed among the thirty, probably as a leader among them. The first, and chief of these three is Abishai, who was Joab's brother. Of him, we are told that he lifted his spear against three hundred men, killed them, and won a name among these three, becoming their captain. Next was Benaiah, the son of Jehoiada, who we are told, had done many deeds. He had also killed two lion like heroes of Moab. He killed a literal lion in the midst of a pit, on a snowy day, and he

killed a powerful Egyptian man with his own spear, after he wrestled it out of his hand. Benaiah was the captain over David's bodyguard, and later on, during the reign of Solomon, he replaces Joab, as the captain over the entire army of Israel. And so, Benaiah won a name among the second group of three mighty men, with Abishai. And then finally, Asahel, the other brother of Joab, who also was a captain among the thirty (listed in verses 24ff), was among this second group of three. That is, of course, until he was killed by Abner, when Israel and Judah were at war, just prior to David reigning over all Israel.

Following these two groups of three then, are a list of thirty other men, who were among David's mighty men, but beneath the first two sets of three. And again, Asahel was also numbered among them as a captain over them. Now, without reading through the list of thirty men again, let me just mention two noteworthy things about this list.

1- Uriah the Hittite is among them (vs. 39). This further highlights the fact that Bathsheba's husband, whom David had murdered, was a good and faithful soldier. We saw this, in the way in which he had interacted with David, after David had gone into and impregnated his wife. Clearly, Uriah was a man of high integrity, who fought well and hard, for the glory of God, the king, and his people, Israel. And again, this only further magnifies the gravity of David's sin, and the abundance of mercy and grace, which God had shone David, in sparing him, even after committing such heinous acts against a good and faithful man.

2- We note that David's mighty men were of a mixed bag. They are not all from one tribe or family, are they? You have a Bethlehemite, a few Harodites, a Paltite, a Tekoite, an Anathothite, a Hushathite, an Ahohite, a Netophathite, a Gibeonite, a Pirathonite, a Gaashite, an Arbathite, a Barhumite, an Ammonite, a Hittite... etc. David's mighty men are composed of a mixed bag of people, from different tribes and territories. And we are told this. More than likely, these select men, having proven themselves in some regard, and having worked their way up the ranks, became captains over thousands, or over large groups, among the armies of Israel. But, it is at least worth noting that men from different tribal backgrounds, make up this list.

## **II. Closing Thoughts and Applications**

Having looked at a general overview of the text then, brethren, let us spend the remainder of our time considering a few closing thoughts and applications for this morning:

1) In the introduction to this sermon, I spoke of the way in which Israel's physical warfare is reflective of the spiritual warfare, which takes place in the church. And brethren, to that end, I believe that we can look at this list of mighty men, from all different tribal backgrounds, and see how they might reflect the faithful, who step up, take risks, and give themselves unto the service of the church. The church is in battle. The church is militant. And to be sure, there are those, within the church, whose interests not being divided, truly commit themselves to engaging in the warfare, unto the difficult, and yet certain, prosperity of the church.

Every individual part of the body has been gifted by God, to serve the body. Everyone is called to pray and to contribute to the growth, edification and prosperity of the body, with whatever gift, God has given them. And so, let me ask you then, are you in the battle? Are you in the trenches of prayer, praying for the protection, growth, maturity and increase of this body? And are you serving, as a useful means unto these ends? Do you have the gift of encouragement, teaching, administration, leading, exhortation... do you have speaking gifts, and are you using them? Or, do you have the gift of generosity, helps, or more of the hands on gifts of the Spirit, and are you actively using your gifts in this body? Are you in the battle? Is Christ's Kingdom and its advancement, primary in your heart and soul... or are you entangled in the affairs of everyday life? What kind of a soldier are you? How do you function in this organism, known as the body of Christ? Are you a hand, a foot, a lung, a kidney, a knee, a leg... etc? In what specific ways are you serving this body, unto the fulfillment of the great commission? Are you among the mighty men, belonging not to David, but rather to his Greater Son, the Lord Jesus Christ? Or are you just too caught up in more important, worldly matters? And so, firstly then, I would ask you to examine your own heart, to see if you are actually in the battle here, or are you an "in and out" Sunday morning, Christian, observing from the sidelines? Christianity is not for "easy chair observers" or inactive soldiers. It is for enlisted, active duty soldiers, who, having been purchased by the blood of Christ, are consciously committed to fighting the battle, which ends in glory! This then leads us to a second, very important application:

2) What is it that makes an individual accomplish such feats? Is it physical stature or the extent of physical armor one has? Well, we have already seen that a child sized, armorless David has defeated a fully armored giant, with the use of a sling and some stones. And furthermore, the war that we are fighting is spiritual, and so, physical stature has very little to do with winning this battle. What is it then?

When you look at the men listed here, brethren, and especially those among the two groups of three, from the stand point of the men, there are two key ingredients, which these men had, which led them to attain to such a high rank:

a- They were not holding onto this world, and therefore, they were willing to take great risks for the Lord and for His people. In the cases of Eleazar and Shammah, both men stood their ground, even though all of the Israelites fled. Beyond the shadow of any doubt, these men were not concerned for their own lives. If they were going to go down, they were going to go down fighting. And so, they stood and fought, without any reluctance, and they obtained a supernatural victory.

b- They were confident not in what they could do, but in what God could do. These men trusted in the living God, that He would do great things, with their little faith. Notice something very significant, which is mentioned in both cases, and which we are to presume, applies to the ultimate successes of all of the mighty men. In verse 10, we are told regarding Eleazar, "He 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 (who had fled) returned after Eleazar only to plunder." Those who fled, offered no help to Eleazar in the battle. But the Lord was his strength, and the people only returned to help pick up the pieces; to help plunder the Philistine assets. And again, regarding Shammah, we are told in verse 12, "But he stationed himself in the middle of the (lentil) field, defended it, and killed the Philistines. *So the Lord brought about a great victory.*" And these two men, along with Jashobeam, broke through a Philistine camp, to get King David a glass of water from the well of Bethlehem!

All of these things were done by faith, with a willingness to lay aside their own lives, and the Lord met them in their faith, and gave them a profound, supernatural victory!

You see, brethren, God does not leave us to ourselves, does he? The question is, "Are we willing to lose our lives for the sake of the Gospel? And are we willing to attempt great things for God, while expecting great things from God! Who will fight? Who will build? Who will go, brethren!? Who is willing to let go of this world, with both hands, so as to serve as a deadly weapon, in the hands of an Almighty God!

Now, not everyone may be a missionary or a pastor or a deacon or an evangelist... etc. But everyone is called to be an active soldier in the army of God. In what way are you fighting to build, to edify, to advance and prosper the work of this church, Grace Reformed Baptist Church? Are you willing to sacrifice time, resources, energy, finances, comfort, corporate and private prayer... etc, to invest in this glorious work? Look at us! We are a mixture of precious souls, from all different backgrounds, called out of darkness into the marvelous light of Christ; washed and cleansed and wholly purified by His shed blood, so that we might fight together, for the greater and eternal cause of advancing Christ's kingdom, here in Merrick, and all throughout the world! Who is willing to sacrifice? Who is willing to take risks? Who is on the Lord's side? God give us the grace to see the big picture... to see from where we have come, and to where we are going!

3) Are you even in Christ this morning? What could this life mean to you, apart from communion and fellowship with the living God and His people?! Material things, placating lusts, moving another notch up on the corporate ladder, fulfilling the American dream, beefing up your IRA.... all for what? There's a coffin and a tombstone awaiting you, at this very moment... you're gonna die folks, do you get that? This will be over shortly, for all of us, even if you live out the fullness of your days. Pause, stop and think, where is the train going here?

Would you be reconciled to God, through Jesus Christ, this morning? You see, here's the problem... etc.

Amen!!!

Benediction: Jude 1:24-25