



Studies in the Life of David

Text

Second Samuel 23:8-39

Topic

We are given a list of the names and representative exploits of David's personal guard, called his 'mighty men'

Title

"Mighty, Mighty Man. I Just Want to Be a Mighty Man"

Introduction

Who is *your* favorite unlikely movie hero?

Here are just a few candidates for the top 'zero to hero.'

- Daniel LaRusso in *The Karate Kid*.
- Sam Gamgee in *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy.
- Rocky Balboa in any of the *Rocky* movies.
- There are a lot of comic book characters that qualify, e.g., Steve "Captain America" Rogers and Peter "Spiderman" Parker.

Our text in Second Samuel is a list of what were called David's "mighty men." They weren't always heroes. If you remember back before David was king, these men were among the distressed population of Israel, who were in debt, who fled to live with David in exile. David molded them into the heroes we read about.

Have you ever thought of yourself as a mighty man or woman of God? You ought to and not because of anything you have done. You simply came to

the Lord - in much distress and as a debtor to sin - and He began to mold you into a hero or heroine of the faith.

He will go on molding you, shaping you, changing you, throughout your lifetime on earth until one day, at your death or in the rapture, He presents you absolutely perfect to His Father in Heaven.

Mean time there is a sense, a humbling sense, in which we should see ourselves as His mighty men and women on the earth.

I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 If You Want To Be A Mighty Man Or Woman For God, Just Start Living Like One, and #2 If You Want To Be A Mighty Man Or Woman For God, Just Start Loving Like One.

#1 If You Want To Be A Mighty Man Or Woman
For God, Just Start Living Like One
(v8-12 & 18-39)

We touched on this theme in our last study, in verses one through seven. David described himself as coming from humble origins to being exalted by God. Now he shows how God did the same for those who gathered to him.

A total of thirty-seven men are listed. The relatively small number would seem to support the idea that there can only be a select few who rise above the rest; that there is a 'cream of the crop' when it comes to serving the Lord.

Not really!

1. For one thing, there are simply too many other passages that indicate God shows no favoritism, and that He loves to elevate the humble to be a hero. Hebrews eleven is a good read in this regard.
2. For a second thing, you need to take into account that God has a different assignment for each of His heroes or heroines. The fact that David had a set number of mighty men didn't exclude others, in various positions, from excelling in their service. He also had 'mighty' priests, 'mighty' counselors, etc.

The biggest obstacle to being used by God is thinking you cannot be used because God has someone else more spiritual than you. He has **you** - right where you are at.

It's like the parable where the master left leaving the stewards with varying amounts of money to invest for him. Upon his return the master rewarded those who had invested their talents rather than hoarded them - regardless the varying amount he had left them with.

As we read chapter twenty-three we will see sub-groupings of three or two within the thirty. That's fine; some did more, but all were mighty men.

One other thing. The chapter indicates that David surrounded himself with thirty mighty men but mentions a total of thirty-seven. One solution is that thirty was the number of guys at any one time and as some of these died, e.g. Uriah the Hittite, they were replaced.

What I want to do is to look at characteristics of these men to see how we, too, are enabled to be mighty for God - right where we find ourselves at home, in the church, out in the world.

2 Samuel 23:8 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.

"Adino the Eznite" seems to be a kind of nickname. It means something like, 'he lifted up his spear.' This great victory, killing hundreds of the enemy, was attributed to a single, simple act of lifting up his spear. God did the rest and the result was amazing.

Lesson one for us is to lift up the spear; or we might say, engage. Get involved. Step-out in faith. Stir up the gift that is in you. Offer yourself each day a living sacrifice to God.

2 Samuel 23:9 And 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.

2 Samuel 23:10 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 returned after him only to plunder.

Eleazar fought through weariness to the point his hand was temporarily cramped and couldn't let go of his sword. You might say he put his hand to the sword and didn't let go.

It's reminiscent of Jesus' words in Luke 9:62 when He said, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." It's an encouragement to us as followers of Jesus to press on in discipleship, to see our service to God as the long haul, to want to not just run the race for a time but to finish well.

We're talking here about being faithful rather than flakey. It's something we can do, being faithful. It's all we are really asked to do!

Have you flaked-out? Maybe you think you've put in your time and now it's 'me-time?' **Be faithful!** Especially in the little things.

2 Samuel 23:11 And 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.

2 Samuel 23:12 But he stationed himself in the middle of the field, defended it, and killed the Philistines. So the Lord brought about a great victory.

The Philistines were raiders. They'd come at harvest time and steal the crops. It was worse than Hopper in *A Bug's Life* because they'd take everything.

Not when Shammah was around! He stood his ground and defeated the Philistines.

The detail that jumps out at me is that "the people fled." They left Shammah all alone. Nevertheless he fought and won.

Being a Christian can involve a sense of aloneness. You quite literally might be the only believer in your family, or at work, or in some other situation. Are you going to listen to the counsel of our selfish society and

feel sorry for yourself? Or are you going to listen to the Lord and stand your ground?

At many points in your walk with the Lord it's going to feel like it's just you and Jesus. You know what? *The Lord designs those times to see if He is enough for you!* He shows you what it is, or who it is, you truly seek. It's a part of His wonderful but jealous love for you.

Skip down to verses eighteen through thirty-nine.

2 Samuel 23:18 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.

2 Samuel 23:19 Was he not the most honored of three? Therefore he became their captain. However, he did not attain to the first three.

Abishai's exploits were a lot like those of Shammah but he didn't get the same press as Shammah. You and I are working every bit as hard for Jesus as the guys and gals getting all the glory. Let them have it without complaining. It's Jesus we serve and it's His "Well done!" we are seeking, *not* the praise or recognition of men.

2 Samuel 23:20 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.

2 Samuel 23:21 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.

2 Samuel 23:22 These things Benaiah the son of Jehoiada did, and won a name among three mighty men.

2 Samuel 23:23 He was more honored than the thirty, but he did not attain to the first three. And David appointed him over his guard.

Man, what do you have to do to "attain to the first three?" Benaiah was totally committed to his service. He was the guy who volunteered for the toughest combat assignments before you even asked for volunteers. Still, from the world's point of view, "he did not attain to the first three."

At many points in your walk the Lord wants to teach you to be content. It may be at a time of abounding; it could be when you are being abased. But it's a lesson we each need to learn repeatedly.

- It's hard to be content when you are abounding. It's hard because comfort lulls you into a false sense of security. You tend to lower your guard and slack-off in your walk and in your work. Pride sets in.
- It's equally hard to learn to be content while being abased - while suffering through some trial. It's hard because the pain and the tears tend to blur your focus on Jesus. Discouragement sets in.

I'm not going to read out loud verses twenty-four through thirty-nine. They list the other mighty men.

Ever feel like you were just part of the roll? You're told you are special to God but nothing really sticks out and no one really takes notice of you.

Well, **Jesus takes notice of you!** If your assignment seems small or insignificant or thankless, it's not. As Mr. Rogers used to sing, *"you're the only you-oo-oo, and I'm the only me-ee-ee."*

I hope I've said enough in this section to encourage you that if you want to be a mighty man or woman for God, just begin to act like one right where you are. Anyone can get involved, lift up the spear, persevere, and be faithful.

#2 If You Want To Be A Mighty Man Or Woman For God, Just Start Loving Like One (v13-17)

In the midst of all these exploits one particular event is highlighted. It happened early in the career of David and his mighty men, while they were in exile and on the run from King Saul.

2 Samuel 23:13 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.

2 Samuel 23:14 David was then in the stronghold, and the garrison of the Philistines was then in Bethlehem.

2 Samuel 23:15 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!"

OK, it might be a little hard to identify with David's desire for a drink of Bethlehem well-water *if you are from Hanford!* Substitute ice cream from Superior Dairy if it helps you to understand his longing for a little piece of home.

2 Samuel 23:16 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...

These guys risked their lives to get David a canteen full of water.

2 Samuel 23:16 ... Nevertheless he would not drink it, but poured it out to the Lord.

2 Samuel 23:17 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.

That was unexpected! Instead of drinking the water, David "poured it out to the Lord" as an offering.

Two things stand out from this story.

The first thing that stands out is that David's men acted on a desire David voiced rather than being commanded. They were so attentive to their captain that they knew what he wanted, and they acted without being given any direct orders to obey.

Let's try to relate that to walking with Jesus. Too often the Christian life is reduced to mechanics. What should I do? What is required? What is the minimum? I'm looking for orders to obey rather than listening for the Lord's desires.

Perhaps an example would help. We all know the importance of having daily devotions with the Lord - of setting aside that precious, personal time to be with Him. I ran across this quote and wonder what your reaction might be.

Most Christians have been taught... to set aside a daily time for prayer and Scripture reading. It's what we are supposed to do... [Well] **Jesus didn't command that we have a regular time with Him each day.** Rather, He tells us to "love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind..." This is how God longs for us to respond to His extravagant, unending love: not with a cursory "quiet time..." but with true love expressed through our lives" (Francis Chan).

How do you react to that?

- If you react by thinking that you can skip your daily devotions, you're missing the point.
- But aren't we missing the point if we maintain 'devotions' as an obligation, or even as a time where we *learn* more but are not *loving* Jesus more?

Here is another way of looking at this. Christians have a tendency to wonder what we *can* and *cannot* do. Can we dance? Can we smoke? Can we drink alcohol? What kind of entertainments are acceptable?

In answering those questions we tend to go to extremes of either legalism or the flaunting our liberty.

The actions of David's mighty men seems to indicate that we can know the very desires of our Savior for our lives so that we never need ask those questions. We automatically know what pleases Him and what doesn't please Him and we act accordingly.

The second thing that stands out from the story is that David poured-out the water as a sacrifice. What do we really think about that? If you had risked your life to get David a drink, would you have been excited about it's being poured-out on the ground in some symbolic gesture?

One time a woman came to Jesus and broke an alabaster jar of precious ointment on His feet. His disciples were furious because the ointment was costly. Jesus commended the woman, did He not?

If you are following the Lord, at some point your life is going to seem as if it were being poured-out on the ground, wasted, lost. Others will even see it that way. Or, worse, no one sees it at all!

Jesus sees it! It isn't wasted if it's for Him! He sees it as an offering, precious to Him.

David Livingstone, the great 19th century missionary to Africa, once said,

People talk of the sacrifice I have made in spending so much of my life in Africa... I never made a sacrifice... **We** ought not to talk of 'sacrifice' when we remember the great sacrifice which He made who left His Father's throne on high to give Himself for us.

It's too easy to become mechanical in our Christianity.

- We schedule the times we are going to spend with Jesus, as if it's really up to us to plan our lives and to make appointments with Him. It's the other way around!
- We wrestle with how much, or usually how little, to give to God while acknowledging that everything we have belongs to Him. The sad fact is that the vast majority of Christians give little or nothing to God. But even those that give a certain regular percentage need to think in more extravagant terms.

Enough of that. The negatives won't motivate you to love; they never do. You only end up heaping on more guilt. You need instead to see the Lord leaving Heaven, giving all, to be with you, to fellowship with you.

You can be these three mighty men who watched as their lives, really, were poured-out on the ground before God.

You just need to start, or return to, loving the Lord with **everything** you've got - with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength.