

God's Mighty Men

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Well, let's go to the old part of the book. Let's go back to 2 Samuel. Would you find your way there? Turn your electronic gadgets off. I don't want to put your picture on the screen because your thing is beeping during the service. We wouldn't do that, but I like to say it anyway. And open your Bible, 2 Samuel back in the Old Testament. King David is in essence running for his life. The Philistines have occupied at least part of the Promised Land. Uncircumcised pagans are encamped in the holy land God set aside for the descendants of Abraham. David finds himself hiding out in Adullam cave. But David had something special. David had his mighty men, the mighty men of David. Let's study about it this morning. 2 Samuel chapter 23, beginning in verse 8.

8 These are the names of the mighty men whom David had: Joshebbasshebeth a Tahchemonite, chief of the captains, he was called Adino the Eznite, because of eight hundred slain by him at one time; 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mighty men with David when they defied the Philistines who were gathered there to battle and the men of Israel had withdrawn. 10 He arose and struck the Philistines until his hand was weary and clung to the sword, and the LORD brought about a great victory that day; and the people returned after him only to strip the slain.

In other words, he killed them all. Verse 11,

11 Now after him was Shammah the son of Agee a Hararite. And the Philistines were gathered into a troop where there was a plot of ground full of lentils, and the people fled from the Philistines. 12 But he [Shammah, that is] took his stand in the midst of the plot, defended it and struck the Philistines; and the LORD brought about a great victory. 13 Then three of the thirty chief men went down and came to David in the harvest time to the cave of Adullam, while the troop of the Philistines was camping in the valley of Rephaim. 14 David was then in the stronghold, while the garrison of the Philistines was then in Bethlehem. 15 David had a craving and said, "Oh that someone would give me water to drink from the well of Bethlehem which is by the gate!" 16 So the three mighty men broke through the camp of the Philistines, and drew water from the well of

Bethlehem which 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, "Be it far from me, O LORD, that I should do this. Shall I drink the blood of the men who went in jeopardy of their lives?" Therefore he would not drink it. These things the three mighty men did.

David's mighty men were valiant warriors. Four thoughts about them to introduce them a little bit. They loved God. These mighty men were devoted to God's nation, Israel. These mighty men were devoted to God's king, David. They would do any task to serve God and country and king, and especially those tasks that no one else would even dare to take on. But fourthly, they were also men under authority. There's a strong parallel, I'm convinced, between these mighty men of David and the deacons of a New Testament church. Of course, now in this present dispensation, we're not fighting as literal armies of a literal nation. We're doing the Lord's work today, not through a nation and through a king, but in this Christian age, God's work centers in his local churches through his pastors and deacons, but in a very real sense, true deacons are mighty men of God.

There are three specific things in the narrative here that speaks to us of the kind of men who are good deacons. I. Let's notice first of all, they must be men of stellar reputation. These men, David's mighty men, were men of stellar reputation. Their reputation was indisputable. They were not perfect men. No man in this church is a perfect man. But on the whole, the pattern of their life was above reproach. It was beyond dispute. Again, in the first 12 verses, we have Josheb-basshebeth, a mighty man of David who slain 800 Philistines, and then Eleazar fought until his hand almost couldn't hold his sword but defeated them all around him on that day, and then Shammah, the man who fought on the plot and when he got through there were no Philistines left standing. These men had indisputable stellar reputations of valor and devotion and courage to the cause of God. They had proven themselves on the field of battle.

Now while today we do not fight in physical perhaps, by the way, there may be a place for that from time to time, men sometimes have to be men, but that's not the primary field of our battle. The Bible tells us we battle though, but we battle a spiritual warfare. Ephesians 6:12 reminds us, "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places." Likewise, like the men of David had to prove themselves to be considered mighty men, the men who would be deacons have to be proven. They have to be qualified. They need to have an indisputable and pure reputation. As 1 Timothy 3:10 reminds us, they must be men who are first tested. You men, you 21 men who will come today to be installed as deacons in this local church, this congregation, and your church elders have looked at your life. We didn't find perfection. You will not find perfection in me. But we are convinced that you have proven reputations. You have served long enough that you have passed the test. We've observed your marriages, your conduct with your wife, your children, your overall home life, your work life, your business life, your social life, and it's our conclusion, as 1 Timothy 3 requires, that you pass the test. Like David's mighty men, you are men of stellar reputation.

Two thoughts, men, on this at this point. First of all, that ought to humble you. It ought to humble you that somehow in God's grace you haven't blown it yet so bad that you would be disqualified from being considered for the office of deacon in God's church. Secondly, not only should this humble you, it should build a resolve in you that you will maintain and continue on in God's grace, not ever defaming his name, but being a faithful servant of his in his church. But I want to mention one other qualification concerning the New Testament deacon. In Acts chapter 6 verse 3, where the first deacons were installed, we see that the writer said that God instructed that these men be men full of the Spirit and of wisdom. Spiritual men and godly men of wisdom are not like the men of the world. The world boasts of its mighty men, but they're usually not mighty, they're usually men of weakness and with ensnared, if you will, in the strongholds of many compromises and many sins. But true mighty men of God, men who are full of Spirit and full of godly wisdom, are not like the men of this earth. As Paul rebuked the Corinthians on one occasion, he said, "You guys are acting like mere men. You're acting like just flesh and blood men who've never been changed by the gospel. You've never been changed by the indwelling Spirit of God. Your your values are like the the the men of the world. Your convictions are like the men of the world. You're acting like mere men." If you're just acting like a mere man, you are not qualified to be God's deacon. The man of God who is Spirit-led and has godly wisdom, has values higher than this world's values, has morals higher than this world's morals, has convictions higher than this world's convictions, and probably most of all has the devotion to God's purposes in the world through his church. That must be there. If you're going to be installed as a deacon to protect God's church, as the New Testament deacons did, then you ought to have a love and devotion and care for God's church that comes from your heart. That's wisdom.

So men, once again, this congregation and your elders has deemed you to be men of spiritual power and men of godly wisdom, you have a reputation that is stellar. That's the way David's mighty men were. Number two in our text, these men like deacons today were also men of stalwart resolve. Men of stalwart resolve. Their resolve was undeniable as we see these men committed to do the right thing, no matter the cost. Three things under this. Notice, first of all, we see their undivided hearts. If you're going to have a stalwart resolve for something, you can't have your heart divided in loyalties. These men had undivided hearts. Look at verses 13 and 14. "Then three of the thirty chief men went down to David in the harvest time to the cave of Adullam, while the troop of the Philistines was camping in the valley of Rephaim." Now, look, it's one thing to know about David hiding out at this point, losing the battle, it's another thing for men to come and join him and say, "David, we put down the stake with you. Come what may, count on us." They had undivided hearts. The enemies of the Lord were occupying the promised man and these mighty men, these three mighty men come to join David. They didn't grow wobbly under these dire circumstances. They were examples of Spirit-filled men. They were all in. They did not come with one foot with David and the other foot in the world if David's cause didn't work out. They were saying, "David, you're God's king. Israel is God's nation. The land does not belong to the Philistines. We're with you come, what may." Stalwart resolve with undivided hearts. These men were sincere down to the marrow of the bone. Ah, in the New Testament, we're commanded to have the sincere

love of the brethren. The word sincere means undivided. It means unmixed. It means in our heart, there's not a part of our heart that's with God in his church, but part of our heart still wants to hang on to the world, "You know, the church may not work out. I might just want to keep some interest out here in the world." Not these mighty men. "David, we're coming to you. If we have to camp in this cave and fight to the last man standing, so be it. We have undivided hearts."

Secondly, under their stalwart resolve, let's notice their initiative. This is such a powerful thing here, their initiative. While these men have joined David in Adullam's cave, hiding from the Philistines at this point, verse 15 says, "David had a craving and said, 'Oh that someone would give me water to drink from the well of Bethlehem which is by the gate!'" So here David is in his grievance and in his distress, in his anxiety, more or less just speaking out loud from his heart. Here he's thinking about that in God's Promised Land, even at the sweet wells of water in Bethlehem are uncircumcised Philistines and David is groaning in his heart, "Oh, that we could drive those infidels out of the land and reclaim what God has promised to the children of Abraham." David's just thinking out loud and while he's contemplating these things, he words it this way, "Oh, that I could just have a drink of water from the well in Bethlehem that is by the gate."

Now, this was not an actual request to anyone. It was certainly not a command to anyone. I don't even know that David knew anyone was listening, but they were. Joshebbasshebeth and then Eleazar and then Shammah heard. These three mighty men looked one at the other. Joshua looked at Eleazar. Eleazar looks at Shammah. Shammah looked at them two and the next moment they grabbed their swords and they're heading out of the cave. Didn't have to say a word. They were men of initiative. They were men of initiative. They take those swords and those mighty men fight through the Philistine garrison, the Bible says. They draw water from the well by the gate in Bethlehem. They fight back through the Philistine lines. They go find David back in the cave, and they said, "One of us overheard you wanted water from the well by the gate in Bethlehem. Here it is." Initiative. Initiative. God's deacons must be mighty men of initiative. Let something in Satan's ploy come against God's church, God's deacons rise up and say, "No, not in this church." Men of initiative. I'm a rare and blessed pastor because I have an army of men, not just deacons, who have that very spirit. I've seen it over and over and over again, men who will not let divisiveness, men who will not let schisms and jealousy and power brokers build a group and cause trouble in God's church. I've watched my men stand up in hallways and other places and say, "We love you, but not in this church." Men of initiative. I call the deacons the white blood cells of the church. Let an infection get in the body and white blood cells rush to the place and give their lives, dying to knock out that infection in the body, and so that's what deacons do for the body of Christ.

In Acts chapter 6, there was murmuring, the Bible says. There was grumbling and complaining and they had a good point. So the pastor said, "Select from among yourselves some deacon," didn't use the word, but that's what they were, "men full of the Spirit and wisdom that we may put in charge of this task. These men are gonna knock this problem out while we go do what we're called to do, and that's study and preach."

New Testament deacons have to be men of initiative. If I hear that there's a couple of families in this church that have grown disgruntled, and they're starting to question and talk to people and build a party spirit, my first question ought to be, "Where are my deacons?" They ought to go with love and compassion and humility, but stalwart initiative saying, "We love you, but not in this church. That's not the way we do things in this church." Some of you may come from uh traditional or typical Baptist backgrounds, you think, well, that's the only way we've ever seen church work done. Well, you've been seeing it wrong. As I've said to you many times, if anything violates Scripture, come open the book, show the elders, we'll agree with you and the Scriptures, amen? We don't chart start movements based on whims and power and control and jealousies and envies and selfish nonsense.

Thirdly, stalwart resolve meant that they had undivided hearts. They were men of initiative, but also they were men of fearlessness. They were fearless. Verse 16 says they crashed through the camp of the Philistines, took water from the well, and then they had to fight back out and brought it to David. King David, God's King, wanted water from Bethlehem's well and these devoted men devoted to God went out and got that water. It didn't matter what happened to them. It didn't matter what it cost. It didn't matter what might could happen. "Pastor, you're preaching up there, but are there men who really would lay down their lives for the benefit of the church?" Yes, there are. And many of you are sitting out here in front of me. You say, "Pastor, I'll just be honest. I don't know that I could do that." You haven't needed to do it yet. You get grace when the task calls for it. There may be a time when you have to go down to the state prison and stand for your pastor because he wouldn't compromise on the new woke religion of America. Who knows? I don't know. But when it's time, God's grace will anoint you with the courage to do what's right and have a stalwart resolve centered in a fearless spirit.

Fearlessness comes from devotion, devotion to God and a desire for his honor and his glory. In this devotion, deacons remain watchful and diligent over the church like a bird dog on a point. They're not going to move off until that bird is flushed and killed. And like David's mighty men, men who would not allow David's request to go unfulfilled, deacons stay on the task until the task is done. I'd like to point out something else that's very specific in our text here. Look, if you will, at verse 15. "David had a craving and said, 'Oh that someone would give me water to drink from the well of Bethlehem which is by the gate!'" Not just any well. David says, "I want water," there's a lot of wells in Bethlehem, "but I want water by the well that's by the gate." So these fellows didn't say, "You know, this is dangerous. Let's just get to the first well we can near Bethlehem and get water." That won't do. That's the Gehazi spirit. Amen, staff? Gehazi is the guy that cut corners on Elijah's principles in order to build the kingdom and God judged him. You're supposed to do things the right way by the book. So David said, "I want the water that come from a specific well, that's the well by the gate." And the men come back, look at it there in um verse 16 now, "So the three mighty men broke through the camp of the Philistines, drew water from the well of Bethlehem which was by the gate." "King, we went and got the water from the well that's by the gate." Fearless men who complete the task precisely according to the word of God.

Well, deacons are like David's mighty men. They're men of stellar reputation, men of stalwart resolve, and thirdly, men of significant reward. There's a real reward for this kind of work. Look at verses 16b through 17, "and took it," this is the last half of 16, "and brought it to David. Nevertheless he would not drink it, but poured it out to the LORD; and he said, 'Be it far from me, O LORD, that I should do this. Shall I drink the blood of the men who went in jeopardy of their lives?' Therefore he would not drink it. These things the three mighty men did." David takes that cup of water that came from the well by the gate in Bethlehem and David is so overwhelmed at the devotion and valor of these men. So he pours it out, and he doesn't just pour it out, note, he pours it out to the Lord and he further says to the Lord, "I I'm unworthy of such devotion. I'm unworthy of this sacrifice. May this be unto You, Lord." This is a service not to just King David. "I'm the physical human being in the role of authority, yes, but this isn't about me. These men, God, did this for You. So this is an offering, Lord, to You. This is a service rendered unto You." You know, David is a type of Christ, he is throughout the Old Testament. Just as Jesus Christ mediates for his remnant in the earth, King David and his mighty men represent the remnant in the earth, the true church, if you will. So Christ mediates before the Father on our behalf, now listen to me, that we might not lose our reward he bought for us on the cross. And I think in like manner, David is pouring this out saying, "God, may this be a remembrance before You of the servant devotion and valor of these good mighty men." In other words, "God, may You honor them. God, may You bless these men. God, may You reward these men."

Now, when it comes to our devotion to the church, as church members or as deacons or elders, whatever it may be, first of all, just to serve in God's church is a wonderful blessing and honor we don't deserve. In Luke 17:7 through 10, Jesus gives a parable about how we should be grateful for anything we get to do for him, "Which of you, having a slave plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come immediately and sit down to eat?'" But he will not say to him, "But will he not say to him, 'Prepare something for me to eat, and properly clothe yourself and serve me while I eat and drink; and afterward you may eat and drink?'" He does not thank the slave because he did the things which were commanded, does he? So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, "We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done." And that should be all of our hearts. That should be the heart of every deacon.

As these three mighty men fight back through the garrison uh lines of the Philistines and bring that cup of water back to David, they weren't wanting any reward. They said, "The king said he wanted water. He told us what water he wanted. Well, he didn't tell us. He just mentioned it and that's what we did. We've done nothing special." That should be all of our attitudes. But there's a balancing truth here. As David pours this out to the Lord as an offering on behalf of those men, he is in effect also saying may they be honored and rewarded for their service. And Christ does promise rewards to those who faithfully serve him in his church, even more so, those who serve like deacons are supposed to serve, those who serve behind the scenes, those who serve seeking no public commendation, those who serve on God's night shift. This is the essence of deaconate service.

In Matthew chapter 6, we're instructed by Christ to minister unto the Lord, not before men that we will receive praise by men, but we're to pray privately, he said. Then your heavenly Father who hears you will reward you. You don't give your gifts publicly to be bragged on by men, Jesus said, yhu give privately that God will see it and he will reward you for it. 2 Corinthians 5:10 tells us that at the judgment seat of Christ, we will be judged and rewarded for deeds done for him in the body. And 1 Timothy 3:13 speaks specifically about deacon service. 1 Timothy 3 uh 13, "For those who have served well as deacons obtain a high standing," you could say an excellent standing, "and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus."

The scholars scholars tell us the phrase high standing is the picture of a staircase, steps ascending upward. I think the point is when deacons do their unseen service, they're the guys who are in the trenches, they're the guys on the night shift. They knock things out and fix things so the church can go on and you may never see them but God says, "I see them and they'll obtain a high standing." I think that has to include a significant reward because they were doing the kind of service their Lord and Master Jesus Christ did, the service no one else esteemed and no one else thought was important, and no one else would dare do themselves.

Perhaps it's accurate to say that deacon service is the most Christ-like service in the church. Remember Jesus in Philippians 2:5 through 8, "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." That's the spirit of Christ service, a humble servant, a bond slave. That's the lowest of all servants, not seen or noticed or commended. No one bragged on Jesus as he hung on the cross. They just screamed, "Crucify Him!" He did the work no one else wanted to do. Of course, we know in the redemption purposes of God, no one else could have done that but the principle remains the same, selfless devotion to God's church.

But God the Father said he will reward Jesus for this kind of service. Philippians 2:9, "For this reason," the kind of service he rendered, "God highly exalted Him, and placed on Him the name that is above every name." And the Old Testament prophet said because Jesus would render himself as a guilt offering in Isaiah 53, that God would allot him a portion with the great. He gave himself in lowly service to serve the cause of God in building the church through the merits of the cross and God said, "I will highly exalt Him." Even God said Jesus went to the suffering of the cross for the joy that was set before him. There's reward, men. There's reward, significant reward for serving the church with an undivided heart, with initiative, with fearless purpose for God's glory.

So like these mighty men whom David poured out an offering, beseeching God on their behalf that they be blessed and honored and rewarded, so God says, "I will bless the men who serve faithfully in the deaconate in My church." Because you do not mind doing the work that no one sees, you do not mind doing the work and receiving no commendation,

you do not mind doing the jobs others just do not want to do, then you're working like Christ works, then you are serving like Christ served, and you receive significant reward.

So I charge the elders, starting with Jeff Noblit, I charge our present deacons, and I charge these men who are being installed this morning, be mighty men of God. Be mighty men of God. You have a stellar reputation, maintain that. Have a stalwart resolve and look forward when it's right the right time in God's purposes, you'll receive a significant reward.