David’s mighty warriors

2 Samuel 23:8-39

Key Verse 23:8a

“These are the names of David’s mighty warriors.”

Today’s passage shows many names of David’s mighty warriors and what they did. No other king in Israel had so many mighty warriors. Then we wonder how David ended up having so many mighty warriors. So today we want to think about how David ended up having so many mighty warriors.

Also we want to think about what is God’s criteria about who would be recorded as David’s mighty warriors. It is because we find that the name of “Joab” is not there to our great surprise. 1 Chronicles chapter 11 also does not show Joab’s name as one of David’s mighty warriors. In today’s passage even Joab’s armor bearer is recorded as one of 37 mighty warriors but Joab is excluded. So why is Joab’s name not there? What is God’s standard not to choose Joab as one of David’s mighty warriors?

So these are the two questions we want to think about today.

**Part I. The three mighty warriors (v.8-17)**

Look at **verse 1a “These are the names of David’s mighty warriors:”** So we have a long list of names in today’s passage especially from verses 24-39. Now what does the Lord want to teach us through the many names of David’s mighty warriors? He wants to teach that the kingdom of David was protected and expanded and maintained not by David alone but by many other mighty warriors.

### 1 Chronicles 11:10 “These were the chiefs of David’s mighty warriors—they, together with all Israel, gave his kingship strong support to extend it over the whole land, as the Lord had promised—“

### God’s promise was to extend David’s kingship over the whole land. And God used all other people for the purpose. So the Lord used all the people of Israel together with the mighty warriors to support David’s kingdom.

### The Bible reveals all believers also support one body of Christ while they are members of one body.

1Corinthians 12:18-27

18But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. 19If they were all one part, where would the body be? 20As it is, there are many parts, but one body. 21The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” 22On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, 24while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, 25so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. 26If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. 27Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

Romans 12:1-5

 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.2Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

3For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. 4For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, 5so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

We are part of one body and we need each other. One day I saw a motive titled ‘The Three Musketeers’. It was a famous novel and it became a movie. It is about king’s body guards. In the movie I was impressed by their motto. It was “one for all; all for one.” Their motto really explains the biblical concept of one body of Christ. We are members of one body. So one for all, and all for one. It reveals the unity of Christ’s body.

### David’s kingdom was expanded through the help of many mighty warriors and all the people of Israel at that time.

Now let us see how the Lord used the three mighty warriors to protect the kingdom of David.

Look at verses 8b-12.

“Josheb-Basshebeth, a Tahkemonite, was chief of the Three; he raised his spear against eight hundred men, whom he killed in one encounter. 9Next to him was Eleazar son of Dodai the Ahohite. As one of the three mighty warriors, he was with David when they taunted the Philistines gathered at Pas Dammim for battle. Then the Israelites retreated, 10but Eleazar stood his ground and struck down the Philistines till his hand grew tired and froze to the sword. The Lord brought about a great victory that day. The troops returned to Eleazar, but only to strip the dead. 11Next to him was Shammah son of Agee the Hararite. When the Philistines banded together at a place where there was a field full of lentils, Israel’s troops fled from them.12But Shammah took his stand in the middle of the field. He defended it and struck the Philistines down, and the Lord brought about a great victory.”

The Three were used by God for great victories. If they lost the battles the kingdom of David could have been reduced and David’s kingship would have been damaged. But the three did not give up fighting when the challenges were severe. When others gave up they did not give up fighting. The first mighty, Josheb-Basshebeth killed 800 enemies in one encounter. Eleazar stood on the ground when the Israelites retreated, and stuck down the Philistines. The Lord brought about a great victory that day. Shammah defended a field of lentils when Israel’s troops fled from the Philistines. The Lord also brought about a great victory through him.

So the victory in challenging situations was what mighty warriors brought. It shows their courage and strength and David’s kingdom was preserved and protected through them. They fought for their king David.

Once I read a story of one Korean general during the Korean war. At that time north Korean army occupied the most of the south Korean land except the land inside of Nak Dong River. The critical battle to keep the small part of the land came in the place of ‘Da Bu Dong’. There American army and Korean army formed a defense line side by side. As one of the Brigadier general (3 stars), his name is Sun Yup Paik, saw his defense line was losing, and he saw 400 or 500 soldiers were retreating. American soldiers silently watched how Korean soldiers were doing. General Paik felt the silent message, “If you do not defend your country why should we do?” And there was already a plan for American army to retreat to Japan if the defense line by Nak Dong River did not work. It means there will be no South Korea as country anymore in world map. So general Sun Yup Paik delivered his inspirational message to his 400 or 500 defeated soldiers on that very field. He explained how important was the battle in “Da Bu Dong”. Then he asked his soldiers to shoot him if he retreated and he ran ahead of all of them although he was Brigadier-general. His soldiers were deeply moved by him and they regained their position and that is why South Korea still survives as a country. In the kingdom of David, there were many general like Sun Yuk Paik of Korea and his kingdom was protected and expanded.

Now look at verses 13-17.

13During harvest time, three of the thirty chief warriors came down to David at the cave of Adullam, while a band of Philistines was encamped in the Valley of Rephaim. 14At that time David was in the stronghold, and the Philistine garrison was at Bethlehem. 15David longed for water and said, “Oh, that someone would get me a drink of water from the well near the gate of Bethlehem!” 16So the three mighty warriors broke through the Philistine lines, drew water from the well near the gate of Bethlehem and carried it back to David. But he refused to drink it; instead, he poured it out before the Lord. 17“Far be it from me, Lord, to do this!” he said. “Is it not the blood of men who went at the risk of their lives?” And David would not drink it. Such were the exploits of the three mighty warriors.”

The story shows the love and devotion of the three mighty warriors for David. David did not ask them to bring the water. But they somehow heard David’s wish coming out of his mouth. It was during the harvest time. So it was dry season and there was not proper amount of drinking water especially in the cave. So David longed for the water from his hometown.

What happened in today’s passage is right after David was anointed as the king over whole Israel.

### 2 Samuel 5:17-18

17When the Philistines heard that David had been anointed king over Israel, they went up in full force to search for him, but David heard about it and went down to the stronghold.18Now the Philistines had come and spread out in the Valley of Rephaim;

But the same cave of Adullam appeared in 1 Samuel chapter 22:1-2.

### 1 Samuel 22:1-2

22 David left Gath and escaped to the cave of Adullam. When his brothers and his father’s household heard about it, they went down to him there. 2All those who were in distress or in debt or discontented gathered around him, and he became their commander. About four hundred men were with him.

So this verse shows the beginning of David’s army. It is the beginning story of David’s might warriors. It was about 400 men who were in distress, in debt, and discontented. Later the number grew to be 600.

[1 Samuel 23:13](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%2520samuel+23:13&version=niv)

So David and his men, about six hundred in number, left Keilah and kept moving from place to place. When Saul was told that David had escaped from Keilah, he did not go there.

When we think about it, it is very amazing to see these people came to David. At that time David was the most wanted man in Israel under king Saul. There was no future hope or security for him. He was living in a cave. But 400 people came to him and later the number increased 600 by the time Saul was dead. They were happy to appoint David as their commander and leader.

What does it show? It shows David had something that attracted such people who were in distress, in debt, and discontented. What is it? The heart of God. David is the only person who is called ‘A man after God’s own heart” in the bible. What is the heart of God? It is mercy and that is what attracted people to him.

Now these 400 people who were in distress, in debt, and discontented became David’s soldiers, and under David they grew to be mighty warriors. Under the mercy of God those losers and unwanted people became useful and mighty warriors of David’s kingdom and they saved many lives and protected their king and the kingdom of their master David.

Now in today’s passage the three mighty warriors of the thirty came to David in the cave of Adullam. When they noticed that David longed for the water from Bethlehem, they risked their lives and broke through the Philistine lines and went there and took the water and again broke through their enemy lines and came back and offered the water to David. And David could not drink it. He said, “But he refused to drink it; instead, he poured it out before the Lord. 17“Far be it from me, Lord, to do this!” he said. “Is it not the blood of men who went at the risk of their lives?”

If David were an ordinary king, he could have drunk it saying, “Thank you very much”. He might have thought that drinking it was the way to accept their loyalty and love for him. But David did not do it because he knew their devotion and love for him came from their devotion to the Lord. So he offered the water as a drink offering to the Lord. He appreciated their love for him, but only the Lord deserves such devotion and love instead of himself.

The story shows what kind of criteria the Lord uses in choosing mighty warriors of David. It was not just military exploits but the love and devotion for their king David. Why is Joab’s name missing in the list of David’s mighty warriors? From human eyes, he must be the first person in the list. But God did not accept him as one of David’s mighty warriors despite all of his brilliant military achievement. Why? Because he did not love David. He did not know the heart of David and killed innocent men like general Abner and Amasa and even Absalom against the will of David.

Jesus said in Matthew 7:21-23.

### Matthew 7:21-23 21“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ 23Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’

These evildoers did a tremendous job. They called Jesus, “Lord, Lord” and they prophesied in Jesus’ name and in Jesus’ name they drove out demons and in his name they performed many miracles. But Jesus told them, “I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers.” I believe this is exactly what David would say to Joab in heaven when Joab said, “In your name and for you I fought numerous battles at the risk of my life and won.” Joab did not love David. Joab did not know David’s heart.

Jesus’ teaching for a Pharisee teaches us about the love and devotion of one woman.

Luke 7:36-47.

36When one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, he went to the Pharisee’s house and reclined at the table. 37A woman in that town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee’s house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. 38As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them. 39When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner.” 40Jesus answered him, “Simon, I have something to tell you.” “Tell me, teacher,” he said. 41“Two people owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. 42Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he forgave the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?” 43Simon replied, “I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven.” “You have judged correctly,” Jesus said. 44Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. 45You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. 46You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. 47Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.”

The sinful woman’s love and devotion was accepted by the Lord.

Now who is mighty warriors in our days? We may need many brilliant soldiers and generals. But spiritually speaking who are mighty warriors?

Jesus said in Luke 9:46-48

46An argument started among the disciples as to which of them would be the greatest.47Jesus, knowing their thoughts, took a little child and had him stand beside him. 48Then he said to them, “Whoever welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. For it is the one who is least among you all who is the greatest.”

The greatest man is like spiritually mighty warrior. And he is the one who welcomes a little child in Jesus’ name. Jesus is teaching spiritually great man is the one who can welcome a little child in Jesus and take care of him. In the case of David, those 400 people who were in distress, in debt, discontented were like little ones. They were weak and they were losers. They were social outcasts. They were bankrupt and they were homeless. But David welcomed them and he became their commander. He became their spiritual shepherd. And they turned into mighty warriors in David’s kingdom. This is why David is a shadow of Jesus Christ to come.

When Jesus came to earth, all kinds of weak and blind and useless and losers came to him. He welcomed them and under his leadership they all became mighty warriors of faith. Jesus 12 disciples were all troubled people. Simon Peter suffered from unstable character. He said big things in his mouth but in action he could never keep his word. He said, “Let us meet next week, all of us without fail, for our unity” to all of his 11 brothers and they all agreed to do so because they were moved by him. When the next week came, everybody showed up except one person. Who was missing? Peter himself, the man who suggested the very meeting. But under Jesus’ leadership he became a spiritual rock. Apostle John suffered from hot temper problem. It was impossible for him to overcome his hot temper. But under Jesus’ leadership he became an apostle of love. He preached the love of God so much.

What about us? What about me? In my case I could have become a homeless or alcoholic if God did not show his mercy through Jesus and many servants of God. I was also in distress, in debt, and discontented. But God had mercy on me.

So who are mighty warriors? Those who welcome little children in Jesus’ name and take care of them. Who are little ones? Those who give us hard time. The truth is we are all little ones too. Thank God we have little ones and we can welcome them in Jesus’ name and take care of them. Then they can grow to be mighty warriors of Jesus. When we do we are working for our king, Jesus and his kingdom.

Jesus will surely appear again together with his kingdom. So apostle Paul told Timothy to preach the word in season and out of season.

2 Timothy 4:1-2 reads, “In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: 2Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.

God called us to fight for Jesus and his kingdom. Jesus recruited us and he is working on us to mold us into his mighty warriors.

**Part II. Abishai and Benaiah and other mighty warriors (v.18-39)**

The rest of the part shows two mighty warrior who were held in greater honor. They are Abishai and Benaiah.

Look at verses 18-23.

18Abishai the brother of Joab son of Zeruiah was chief of the Three. He raised his spear against three hundred men, whom he killed, and so he became as famous as the Three.19Was he not held in greater honor than the Three? He became their commander, even though he was not included among them.

20Benaiah son of Jehoiada, a valiant fighter from Kabzeel, performed great exploits. He struck down Moab’s two mightiest warriors. He also went down into a pit on a snowy day and killed a lion. 21And he struck down a huge Egyptian. Although the Egyptian had a spear in his hand, Benaiah went against him with a club. He snatched the spear from the Egyptian’s hand and killed him with his own spear. 22Such were the exploits of Benaiah son of Jehoiada; he too was as famous as the three mighty warriors. 23He was held in greater honor than any of the Thirty, but he was not included among the Three. And David put him in charge of his bodyguard.

Both of then were held in greater honor. Abishai became the commander of the mighty three although he was not one of them. Benaiah was held in greater honor than any of the thirty and he became the chief of David’s body guards. All other names of mighty warriors of David are recorded in verses 24-39.

In conclusion, God established David’s kingdom through many mighty warriors. In the same way God establishes Jesus’ kingdom through many spiritual warriors. The beginning of David’s army and mighty warriors was when David welcomed 400 people who were in distress, in debt, and discontented. They were losers and unwanted people. Under his leadership they grew to be might warriors. In our days mighty warriors are those who welcome little ones in Jesus’ name and take care of them. God’s criteria for mighty warriors is love and devotion for their king.

One word: Is your name in the names of Jesus’ mighty warriors?