

## Mighty Men of Valour

God in His infinite wisdom gives us a number of lists of names in the first chapters of the first book of Chronicles. The first lists are the genealogies. They may not seem important to many, but if you were an Israelite looking to trace back your origins to Abraham, and therefore being one to whom the covenant which God made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob applies, the lists are vital. It would confirm that you were a member of the House of Israel; unless you had the right birth you would not belong to Israel. This applies also to Christians; if they do not have the right spiritual birth they don't belong to the church of Jesus Christ. Jesus says *"we must be born again"* to enter the kingdom of God. Paul writing to Timothy makes this statement. *"Nevertheless the foundation of God stands sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His"*. So with the church of Jesus Christ those who belong to Him are known of Him in just the same way as the children of Israel were known not only unto the people but also to God Himself, and therefore are included in the lists of the genealogies. Jesus says, *"Your names are written on my hands"*. All this gives us such wonderful eternal security, *"The foundation of God stands sure"*.

Back in 1 Chronicles, we then have lists of the tasks people were to do and who should do them. God knows His people and appoints them to their work, both for Israel and also for the church. We read, *"And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues"* and *"When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men....And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ"* and *"But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him"*. So we have God's appointment in the works we are to do, and so it was, as we have seen, with Israel. This applied in particular during the reign of David when tasks were allocated to the chosen ones, and now with the church each of us is given work to do and that work is appropriate to our 'spiritual gifting'. It is also true that God knows us through and through, and we read *"But all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do"*. Therefore God knowing us so well, He knows our make-up in body, mind, soul and spirit and appoints us to the work to which we are best suited. This is not based on our own judgement but on the judgement of God. We are to be obedient and submissive to the will and authority of God. The Old Testament has examples of those appointed to tasks who considered themselves unsuited but proved to be the very people who God needed at that time.

We come to lists in chapter 11 and more particularly in chapter 12 of those men described as *"They were among the mighty men, helpers of the war"*. These are men who joined David in his battle, at that time against Saul, the then king. They are described as 'mighty men' and they were 'helpers of the war'. Wars are made up of battles and often go on for long periods of time, with lots of battles as part of that war. We read in 2 Corinthians 10, *"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds"*, showing that Christians are engaged in warfare and have spiritual weapons with which to fight. As with Israel, there will be many battles, not physical but spiritual, and in many ways the war will continue until our Lord Jesus returns. *"He must reign until all His enemies are made His footstool"*. As with Israel, the opposition, satan, the enemy of our souls, and his hosts are always wanting to 'do battle' and each battle has to be won to ultimately demonstrate that Jesus is the Lord. The church of Jesus Christ is engaged, as workers

together with Him, in the war in order *“that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God”*. That wisdom of course is the ‘cross of our Lord Jesus Christ’ and its outworking in the lives of His people bringing victory to all who serve Him. So, there is war, there are battles, and the Lord Jesus needs ‘mighty men’ (not just men but women too of course ) as ‘helpers of the war’, and it could be suggested that the same qualities are required for us, as we fight our spiritual battles, as were required in those mighty men who helped David. We will examine those qualities and see *“What manner of persons you ought to be in all holy conversation and godliness”* and therefore how we are, or how we are to become, ‘mighty men of valour’. Valour is defined in the Collins English Dictionary as **‘Valour is great bravery, especially in battle’** and comes from the Latin word for strength.

Our Lord Jesus was, of course, the ultimate ‘mighty man of valour’, demonstrated in all He accomplished not only in His own life but very much in His death on the cross. It was the manner of this death which led to His resurrection; *“It was impossible for death to hold Him”*. We read, *“For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame and is now sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high”*; total victory for Our Lord Jesus. Sin had no authority over Him, and for anyone seeking to be a ‘mighty man of valour’ they must *“Reckon themselves dead indeed unto sin and alive unto God through our Lord Jesus Christ”*, so that sin has no dominion over them. Jesus said, *“If any man will follow after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross”*. That is just the beginning of the way to be a ‘mighty man of valour’, and again Jesus’ testimony, *“I have come not to do my own will but the will of Him who sent me”*, must apply to our lives. When, and only when, that applies in our hearts are we in a place where we could even start to be considered to be ‘mighty men of valour’. In chapter 12 of 1 Chronicles we read of some of the children of Benjamin and Judah who came to David and David challenged them as to their purpose. Their response was, *“Thine we are, David, and on thy side”*. In 1 Chronicles 12 vs. 8 we read of those who separated themselves to David, perhaps these phrases sum up the necessity; Paul writes of being ‘separated unto the gospel of God’ with everything devoted to this one life and task. Paul, even as an apostle, worked ‘with his hands’ to earn his own support that the gospel was *“not to be blamed”* and that he was ‘accountable’, or dependent on no one.

Paul, in his letters to the churches, writes to Timothy about being a soldier *and “enduring hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ”*. It is clear, therefore, that being a ‘soldier for Jesus Christ’ is God’s expectation for Christians. Our battles are spiritual and not physical, and being involved in such warfare will involve us going through hard times. We will be challenged mentally, emotionally, physically and spiritually. Interestingly, we are to go through hardness and yet not become hard in our hearts. Love must abound in us towards all people, and a sign of a true warrior for Jesus Christ will be that their hearts are not ‘hardened through the deceitfulness of sin’. They will not become bitter through difficult experiences and disappointments but maintain their vision before God for the work He has given them to do, and a heart full of love for God and for people which will overflow whatever our circumstances.

In verse 24 of 1 Chronicles 12 we read of the children of Judah who were ‘armed and ready for war’. That is a basic requirement for our ‘mighty men of valour’. Paul describes for us ‘the armour of God’ in Ephesians 6, and it is good to read and understand exactly what those things really mean and to

understand that we are to put on 'the whole armour of God'. Perhaps just two thoughts about the armour of God; there is much which could be said but just these two comments may be of help. The very foundation of the armour is 'to gird our loins with truth'. Everything in our life must be real and honest and based on the truth of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is no place for fantasy and imagination, falsehood or pretence. The shield is one of faith, and we are told 'faith without works is dead'. So real faith receives, and it sees its outworking in the practical realities of life. When we believe on the Lord Jesus for our salvation, our sins really are washed away and our consciences cleansed from dead works so we can serve the living God. Our lives are changed, and those who believe in the Lord will never be ashamed. Faith, real faith, real works, anything else is less than God intended.

The shield of faith is to protect us from the 'fiery darts of the wicked one'. Fiery darts are to set us on fire, to get us burning from the wrong source and so bring about our destruction. Many Christians find themselves all taken up with fears, doubts and unhelpful actions which burn in them because a 'fiery dart' has landed on them. They get caught up burning for the wrong purpose or with the wrong emotion or feelings, and not being subject to the will of God. Such burning moves us away from the real purpose of our Christian lives, and yet often seems to be the right thing to do. It is a clever way of the enemy deflecting us from trusting in the Lord Jesus. We see very much therefore the need to be 'armed' and 'prepared for battle'; we are in a war.

The final verse of Proverbs chapter 25 provides an interesting thought as concerns the spiritual protection we have for our lives. *"He that has no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls"*. This implies that the secret of outward protection is to have rule within, in our hearts. When there is a 'ruling' over our own heart/spirit then it provides protection from that which would attack us from without. Without such a 'ruling' in the heart/spirit we are like a city which is broken down and without its walls. In olden days, especially Old Testament times, cities were surrounded by walls, often very high and strong walls, to guard against attack from enemies coming from outside. The book of Nehemiah is very much about the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem, broken down when the people of Judah were sent into exile in Babylon. The walls would provide protection for all the citizens within; Rehoboam, Solomon's son, built walls around many of the cities in Judea after the division of Israel. The book of Romans tells us that we have 'members'; we are body, soul and spirit. The most outward part is our body, and then our soul, which is really the real us with all our character and personality, and the most inner part is our spirit. We would expect the body as the outermost part to provide the protection we need physically, and in many ways it does so. Our skulls provide excellent protection for our brains, a hard tissue protecting a very soft and vulnerable tissue. However, that does not apply spiritually, and it is the strength within our spirits which, we are told, provides the protection for our souls, minds and even our bodies from attack from our spiritual enemy. For us to 'reign over our own spirits' is impossible in our own strength because of the sin in our hearts, and yet if and when we allow the Lord Jesus to deal with the principle of sin within us and then reign in our hearts, then that ruling and Jesus' authority provides the spiritual protection which we need for our lives and all the parts of our being. We cease to be open and vulnerable to sickness both physical and mental, depression and so on. We find a wholeness in us which comes from the wholeness of the life of our Lord Jesus within our spirits.

In Romans chapter 13 Paul tells us to *“put you on the Lord Jesus Christ”*; we cannot put our Lord Jesus on the outside, but we can on the inside, and by doing so bring all the authority and rule of the risen Christ to bear upon our lives, and so we find all the protection we need. It is just another way of saying put on the whole ‘armour of God’; then we are ready for war. Our armour is our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul added after ‘put on the Lord Jesus Christ’, *“And make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof”*. In other words, do not feed your flesh, don’t provide for it so that you can fulfil its desires. Following the ways of the flesh makes us carnal and not spiritual, we are vulnerable; the flesh is the very place the enemy will attack when we fulfil the lusts of the flesh rather than the will of God. Moving in the flesh is a definite hindrance to walking in the spirit and is not good spiritual exercise to get us spiritually fit. Paul tells us, *“Rather exercise yourselves to godliness”*. For a list of the lusts of the flesh look in Galatians chapter 5.

Back in 1 Chronicles chapter 12 we read of the people of Zebulun; *“Of Zebulun, such as went forth to battle, expert in war, with all instruments of war, fifty thousand, which could keep rank: they were not of double heart”*. These men were experts, they were well practised in **all** the instruments of war. ‘Practice makes perfect’, so we are told; here we have men who were not slack and sloppy and sitting around, making provision for the flesh, they were fit and ready and well-practised in the use of **all** their weapons and so able to overcome in every circumstance. In the same chapter we read of those from Benjamin. *“They were armed with bows, and could use both the right hand and the left in hurling stones and shooting arrows out of a bow”*. They could use both hands equally well; elsewhere in our Bibles we are told they were as accurate as being able to hit a hair’s breadth. The practice required would have been considerable and yet in their hearts they were determined to be ‘mighty men of valour’ and so spent their time in preparation. Paul says to us *that “The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds”*. He also said that *“So fight I, not as one that beats the air”*. In other words when I fight I don’t miss, I don’t waste my energy and miss the target but work effectively with the Lord Jesus in the battles I fight. We can see how this marries up spiritually with the natural fighting of the children of Israel and how they were ready and expert and how they did not miss their target. The comment about how Paul fights comes in this context. *“And every man who strives for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beats the air”*. This is about striving for ‘the mastery’; to be an overcomer, one who has mastered the art. We have ‘master bakers’, ‘master butchers’ ‘master tailors’, here, with Zebulun we have ‘master warriors’, those who have mastered **all** their weapons and know how and when to use them. All are considered to be expert in what they do, not just one or two people, not just the pastor or the bishop or the minister or even the apostle and prophet. So should we as Christians all be expert in our weapons of warfare, well trained and ready for the ‘Master’s use’.

It all involves living before the Lord in our lives, and in practical terms praying in the Spirit, waiting on the Lord, reading and learning our Bibles. Also reading the testimonies of those who have been ‘mighty men of valour’ before is so helpful. We surround ourselves with a great ‘cloud of witnesses’ to build up our faith. It is much better to surround ourselves with such testimonies than to be beset or besieged by sin. Jesus the great ‘mighty man of valour’ says, *“Ask and it shall be given you, seek and you will find, knock and it will be opened to you”*. Here is Jesus’ testimony; here is His great victory encouraging our faith to take hold of God for all we need. He walked this way and proved it

to be true even through death, and so it will be for all who will follow the example of our Lord Jesus. Use the gifts, especially the spiritual ones you have received. If you prophesy, prophesy; if you work miracles and have gifts of healings, use them to the blessing of others and don't let them go into decline. Paul says to the Galatians, *"You did run well but who hindered you?"* So many Christians start well with the gifts and works and yet let them just fall away. Use what you have been given of God and it will grow, mature and develop; Amen.

We also read of the men of Zebulun that they did not 'break rank'. A further discipline is applied here in their lives in that they fought together, in a sense, as one man. One of the great strengths of the Roman Army in the days when they conquered so much of their world was that they fought with discipline together, and some of their strategies depended on them being totally in rank with no gaps for the enemy. That could be said of us as individuals when all our members, all the aspects of our character and personality, mind, body and spirit, are garrisoned together as one under the commandment of the Lord Jesus. Jesus said *"The prince of this world comes and has nothing in me"*; no gaps; no weak places; no besetting sins. However, the 'not breaking rank' probably applies more here to the warriors working together and being united. We read in Psalm 133 *"How good and pleasant it is when brethren dwell together in unity for there the Lord has commanded the blessing, even life for evermore"*. It is where people are 'one', when they are united in purpose, that there is real power and authority in their praying and ministry. In Acts we read, *"They were all with one accord in one place"*, *"All that believed were together,"* and *"They lifted up their voice with one accord to God"*. We see how unity was outworked and maintained, people did not break rank. The 'mighty man of valour' will do all he/she can *"To maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"*. However, there is so much division in the church of Jesus Christ today. Is this why the church is so weak and the brethren no longer call out to the Lord with 'one voice'? The author, as he travels, finds all sorts of people doing their own thing with their own ministry, often working against each other, seeking their own gain and reputation. For example, in Kenya two brothers who once worked together have churches next to each other; and that is just one situation, easy to point to as it is so clear to see the sadness.

Of course, God calls out people to start new works; but how much is of God and how much is of the desires of the people themselves and their own ambition in what they are doing? *'By their fruits ye will know them'* is the word of our Lord Jesus, but we read in Matthew 7, *"Not every one that says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity"*. This ought to very much cause us to examine our hearts and our motives to make sure we have not 'broken rank' and really are 'mighty men of valour' doing the will of the Father which is in heaven.

These men of Zebulun help us again as they were not of 'double heart'. 'Not in two minds' may be a more modern phrase we use, but it is about what we are really seeking and therefore whether our heart is correct. 'Heart' is really about motive, so as we have seen above, with our concerns as to those who perhaps 'do their own thing', what is their motive and is there within their heart an ulterior motive? Do they have another ambition which runs alongside and is maybe deeper than that which is seen on the outside? Are they seeking their own reputation, wealth and gain? Our Lord

Jesus of course 'made Himself of no reputation and then took on Him the form of a servant'. He must be our example; this is the way of the true 'mighty man of valour'. Jesus never broke rank, was never of double heart and was expert in all the things he did. Let us follow Him. *"Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things (all you need in the form of food, clothing and residence) will be added unto you"*, is Jesus' comment, and perhaps a true test of the true 'mighty man of valour' is seeing God meet his need by looking only to the Lord. God sees the thoughts and intents of the heart, He is not fooled; we reap what we sow. We are told by James that 'a double minded man is unstable in all his ways and receives nothing from the Lord'. This perhaps is why so many plead for resources as they are not in real faith and their prayers are not answered, either for their own needs or, more importantly, for others. Are they those who fight and beat the air, do they miss the mark? Are they not striving for the mastery in all things, and do they fail the test of being 'mighty men of valour'?

In 1 Chronicles 11 we read, *"Then all Israel gathered themselves to David unto Hebron, saying, Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh"*. Perhaps this is the secret for us to see. The whole of Israel here are saying 'we are bone of your bone and flesh of your flesh'. In Ephesians chapter 5 we also read, *"For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones..... This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church"*. Israel of course are talking of a natural heritage. They were one with David all being of the people of Israel, realising the relationship which they had with him and why he was to be their king. They looked to their history and saw how David had led them in battle even when Saul was king, and David was their 'champion' They could look back to the wonderful triumph over Goliath, even when David was a young man, and how that victory had delivered the whole people from tyranny. The people embraced David as king recognising they are his flesh and bone. It is not just flesh and blood, it is more fundamental than that; those who gathered at that time would not all be his relatives by natural descent, but his people, the children of Israel, all being the descendants of Abraham to whom God had made a covenant regarding His people. They would have all been partakers of this covenant and have an inheritance among the children of Israel.

We are the church of Jesus Christ, we are His people. It is a great mystery, but spiritually we are His flesh and bones. Once born again, we have the same Father and embrace Jesus as Lord because of the victory He has worked for us in His cross. That victory delivers us from the tyranny of sin, death and the devil, and now we are the sons and people of God. We are partakers of the New Covenant made through the blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ and with an eternal inheritance among the people of God. Truly we are flesh of Jesus' flesh and bone of Jesus' bone; but this is all in the spirit, it is spiritual. As we have seen, the battles fought by Israel were physical, so their relationship with David as king was natural. Our battles are spiritual and our relationship with Jesus as Lord is spiritual. There is the same closeness and the commitment and the loyalty to Him, perhaps even more so than the men of Israel to David. Jesus is our Lord and we owe Him everything. He becomes our example, as was David for those men of Israel who were 'mighty men of valour' and carried out such glorious exploits. Their achievements are all listed and some are just miraculous, with such bravery against impossible odds, and yet God was with them and fought with them and for them. Jesus knows our works and is our example as 'a mighty man of valour'. He fights with us and for us, by His Spirit so we too can overcome, even against impossible odds, in all situations looking to Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.

In 1 Chronicles chapter 12 we read, *“All these men of war, that could keep rank, came with a perfect heart to Hebron, to make David king over all Israel: and all the rest also of Israel were of one heart to make David king”*. Their hearts were perfect, they all kept rank and were in unity together with one purpose to make David king. For us, the people of God, we must be of one heart and one purpose to see Jesus as Lord. Of course He already is Lord, and sits waiting for His enemies to be made His footstool, and yet that Lordship needs to be outworked and demonstrated in every situation and life. That is the purpose of the gospel, to bring all to the knowledge of Jesus Christ as Lord, to be delivered from the power of sin and death; to see each life brought into the kingdom of God, each soul free to serve the Lord Jesus, each child of God with eternal life to live with Jesus for ever. The ministry of the gospel is the work of Jesus’ church. In the verse quoted above, even those who were not warriors were of one heart, such was the example of the warriors and perhaps even more so the inspiration of having David, so great a warrior, as king. Likewise, for all in the church of our Lord Jesus the inspiration of having Him, so very great a warrior, as Lord should bring us to unity of heart and purpose with Him. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done. There is much inspiration too from ‘famous Christians’, perhaps ‘normal Christians’, who have such wonderful testimonies of God working in their lives. As in the book of Hebrews, going back through the history of Israel, they were surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses; we too have an even greater cloud of witnesses, from the history of the church, who have proved to be mighty men and women of valour over so many years. Indeed every Christian is a witness of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and adds to the great cloud of witnesses by their testimony.

Some of the ‘mighty men of valour’ fought on their own, some in threes, some as a great army. The Lord knows His people and the work He has given them to do. He knows us and what works best for our calling, but whether on our own, with others, or among the church of God, in all things we look to Him to be those ‘mighty men (and women) of valour’ proving the power and authority of God in our lives.

We wrestle not with flesh and blood but with spiritual wickedness in heavenly places; our battles are spiritual; but mighty men and women of faith, of prayer, of intercession, of love and of grace and of mercy are needed, all with the purpose of seeing Jesus as Lord in all things. He is our great example, the weapons are there, the shield of faith and the sword of the spirit, the prayer and the intercession are readily available to all of God’s people. We all have access to the Father by one Spirit through Our Lord Jesus Christ. Each battle won, a part of the war, hastens the return of Our Lord Jesus, when every knee will bow and every tongue will confess Him to be Lord to the glory of His Father.

The history of the Christian church, as with the history of Israel, is full of mighty men and women of valour doing the will of God and hazarding their lives for Jesus’ sake. Today, as the return of the Lord Jesus becomes nearer, ‘mighty men and women of valour’ are very much needed to be ‘helpers in the war’, to have the testimony that ‘we always please Him’; our goal ‘having done all to stand’; to stand and overcome in all things.

Paul strove for the mastery, to be an expert, to be skilled and able and ready for the ‘Master’s use’. We have seen how such people became mighty men in the days of Israel, serving God and king. Will you strive for the mastery and become the person God can use and recognise for the acts of faith and love which you will work in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and do all for the glory of God?

When the Lord spoke to Gideon and called him, he was called a 'mighty man of valour'. At that time he had done nothing and, like most of us, he was afraid to do even the first thing God told him to do. God however saw the potential, the future and what Gideon would become, the victory he would accomplish and the deliverance he would bring. Gideon saw nothing in himself but God did. Maybe, even if we see no potential in ourselves, God does, and calls us to do His will; if we will follow Him the testimony of God "*You mighty man of valour*" will be fulfilled in our lives. Praise the Lord.