

DAVID'S LEADERSHIP OF HIS MIGHTY WARRIORS

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In **2 Samuel 23:8-39** we have a gallery of David's 37 mighty men. They were elite troops, distinguished here as notable heroes. There are three categories of men.

- *The three mighty men* (vv. 8-17)
- Two who did mighty deeds but *did not attain to the three* (vv. 18-23)
- Thirty-two distinguished warriors (vv. 24-39)

This list is repeated with others, probably of lower rank, in 1 Chronicles 11:11-47. Some of the spellings differ, but they are clearly the same people. Some of the numbers also differ. The most likely reason for the differences is that the 2 Samuel list was given at (or after) the end of David's life. The context of the 1 Chronicles list was David being anointed as king over all of Israel at Hebron 30 years earlier (1 Chronicles 11:1-3), just before the conquest of and David's move to Jerusalem.

2 Samuel 23:8-17 lists the main inner circle of three mighty men. The first is listed with a number of kills. The next two are listed with the details of particular heroism in battles against the Philistines. In verses 13-17, there is a touching account of an event that happened while David was in the cave at Adullam. Here an act of loyalty was carried out without a command to do so. These three, on their own, conjured up a plan to risk their lives and broke through the camp of the Philistines to bring David water from the well in David's home town of Bethlehem. But David was so moved that, rather than drink the water, he *poured it out to the Lord* as a ceremony of honor to the three mighty men. They had risked their lives, just to fulfill David's comment on desiring water from Bethlehem.

2 Samuel 23:18-19 gives special mention to Joab's brother Abishai who also killed hundreds of men and was promoted to commander of the thirty. But we are also told *he did not attain to the three*.

2 Samuel 23:20-23 tells us about Benaiah the son of Jehoiada. He was also known for the men he killed with an interesting comment, *He also went down and killed a lion in the middle of a pit on a snowy day*. Again, *he was honored among the thirty, but he did not attain to the three*.

2 Samuel 23:24-39 lists 32 more warriors of special mention. The first and last names are interesting. The first is Joab's other brother Asahel. He was called *swift-footed as one of the gazelles which is in the field*. He was killed by Abner while pursuing him. The last name is Uriah the Hittite, who David had sent to be killed after his affair and with, and learning of the pregnancy of, Uriah's wife Bathsheba.

- **Application #1:** Godly leadership is marked by people willing to follow them, fight for them and with them over a long period of time. Those closest to David at the beginning of his campaign, and those who were with him as he became king, were with him when he died, 30 + years later.
- **Application #2:** Godly leaders are people who love God more than the people they lead. These men were honored for their loyalty, courage, and hard-fought battles for David because they saw something in him that was different from Saul. Saul was in it for himself, David was in it for God. David's men understood he was God's anointed king, but he was also a man who loved God, more than winning battles, more than being king, more than his wives, and more than them.
- **Application #3:** Mighty men and women are those who kill the enemy, the more killing they do, the more honorable they are. The mighty men of David were killers. They killed other men to establish the reign of David over a United Kingdom of Israel and Judah. We are also to be killers, but not of people. Our enemy is our own sin nature and the influence of a satanic and demonic world.

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 (Ephesians 6:12).