

Introduction

1. Throughout the story of David, we see references to his mighty men:
 - a. In most instances, this phrase refers to an elite military force made up of thirty men (they are actually referred to as **“the thirty”** on numerous occasions)
 - b. We find their primary purpose in 1 Chronicles 11:10: **“Now these are the heads of the mighty men who David had, who gave him strong support in his kingdom, together with all Israel, to make him king according to the word of the Lord concerning Israel.”**
 - c. These men were fierce warriors, the best of the best, and David’s most loyal servants
 - d. They were David’s Special Forces much like the Green Berets of the U.S. Army, or the Navy Seals or Marine Rangers
 - e. Hushai, a friend of David’s described them as **“fierce, like a bear robbed of her cubs in the field”** (2 Samuel 17:8)
2. Today we are going to look at three passages that are all about David’s mighty men: two are found in 2 Samuel 21 and 23 and the third is the parallel passage in 1 Chronicles 11:
 - a. These passages include the names of David’s mighty men—there are 37 names because they didn’t all serve at the same time
 - b. Sometimes all we get are the names with no additional information
 - c. However, for a handful of the men, we are given additional details into their exploits, skills, bravery and loyalty
3. I would like to propose that what we learn about these men in how they served their king should motivate and encourage us as we serve our King, Jesus Christ

A. The first thing I want us to see is that David’s mighty men were both servants and soldiers (READ 21:15-22)

1. The men in this passage are often referred to as **“the four”** by scholars because the author describes the exploits of four of David’s mighty men (they are Abishai, Sibbecai, Elhanna, & Jonathan who happened to be David’s brother)
2. You may not have caught it but notice that the author book ends this passage by identifying these men first and last as David’s servants:
 - a. **“Now when the Philistines were at war with Israel, David went down and his servants with him...”** (21:15)
 - b. **“These four [giants] were born to the giant in Gath, and they fell by the hand of David and by the hand of his servants”** (21:22)
3. But these men were also soldiers and spent much (most?) of their lives fighting alongside David in battles against their enemies:
 - a. This passage mentions four specific campaigns or wars against the Philistines (SEE vs. 15, 18, 19, 20)
 - b. These are just a fraction of the battles that these men fought on behalf of David

- c. The Bible records between 9 to 12 battles that David and his men fought (depending on how you count them since some seem to overlap), but even this likely doesn't tell the whole story
- d. All told, David and his mighty men fought and defeated at least nine nations: the Philistines, Amalekites, Edomites, Moabites, Ammonites, Geshurites, Girzites, Arameans, and Aram

B. The second thing I want us to see is that David's mighty men often faced enemies that were bigger and more powerful than they were

- 1. When it came to their enemies, Israel was always outnumbered
- 2. These armies were often equipped with weaponry that was much more advanced than what David and his men possessed (e.g. cavalry with horses, chariots)
- 3. But the Philistines in our passage today had another distinct advantage over David and his mighty men—they were giants:
 - a. The Philistines mentioned in this passage are described as being descendants of **"the giant"** or **"giants"** (see 16, 18)—the Hebrew word is Rapha who was likely the father of the Raphaim
 - b. The Raphaim are first mentioned in Genesis 14:5 along with the Zuzim and the Emim who are described elsewhere as giants
 - c. If you remember, when the Israelites first arrived in Canaan after the Exodus they were afraid to enter because it was filled with giants; they said Israel was like grasshoppers in their sight
 - d. The two most famous giants in the Bible are the Philistine Goliath (who was between 7.5 and 9.5 tall feet depending on the manuscript) and Og, king of Bashan, who was a Rephaim. Deuteronomy 3:11 describes his bed as being thirteen feet long and six feet wide!
- 4. And yet, even in the face of such giants, David's mighty men showed tremendous courage and defeated their enemies:
 - a. V. 16-17: Abishai defeated a Philistine named Ishbi-benob whose spear (likely just the tip which was made of metal) weighed about 8 pounds (half the weight of Goliath's but still substantial); he also possessed some sort of **"new"** type of weapon (called a sword here but that's supplied)
 - b. V. 18: Sibbecai stuck down a giant named Saph
 - c. V. 19: Though v. 19 says Elhanan killed Goliath, the parallel passage in 1 Chronicles 20:5 states that it was actually Lahmi, the brother of Goliath that he killed—the shaft of his spear is described as being like that of a **"weaver's beam"** which likely refers to it being wrapped with straps or cloth that allowed it to be retracted after being thrown (e.g. advanced weaponry)
 - d. V. 20: Finally, David's brother Jonathan, defeated a Philistine of **"great stature"** who had **"twenty four fingers and toes"** (six on each hand and foot)

C. The third thing I want us to see is that David's mighty men risked their lives out of devotion to him (they weren't drafted or forced to serve)

- 1. We saw this in the verses we just read:
 - a. One of the things that made David such a great leader and king is that with few exceptions, he was always the first to go into battle and did so at the front of the line

- b. We see here in v. 15 that he fought against the Philistines until he was worn out which put him at great risk, especially with such a formidable enemy as a Philistine giant
 - c. In response, David's mighty men order David not to go out to battle with them again in order that "**the lamp of Israel**" not be extinguished (it's unclear if this refers to just this battle or all future battles)
 - d. Their devotion to David led them to put David's life above their own
2. We find another example of their deep devotion to David in another incredible story found in 23:13-17 (READ):
- a. David and some of his men are camped in a cave surrounded by Philistines
 - b. There's no water and David mentions he has a "**craving**" for water from the well in his home town of Bethlehem—which is not only 12 miles away but occupied by Philistines
 - c. So, three of his mighty men—referred to as the Three, or captains (8)—risk their lives by breaking through the Philistine line, into their camp, then collect water from the well at Bethlehem and bring it back to David!
 - d. David was so moved by their actions that instead of drinking the water he poured it out as a symbolic blood offering and sacrifice to the Lord
 - e. What kind of men would do this? Well, if verses 8-12 are an introduction to the three men in this story then we know because we have their names and what they were known for:
 - 1) Josheb-basshebeth (READ 23:8):
 - a) He was a high ranking official among David's mighty men—"**chief of the captains**" (NASB)
 - b) He's known for killing eight hundred men *at one time* with his spear (preferred reading by most translations)
 - 2) Eleazar (READ 23:9-10):
 - a) He was known as one of only three men who stayed on the battlefield with David after others had retreated --2 Chronicles 11:12-14 describes it as a field of barley surrounded by Philistines
 - b) The text says he fought until his hand was so weary that it was stuck clenched around his sword
 - c) The rest of the army didn't return until he and David had killed all the Philistines, and when they did it was simply to strip the dead
 - 3) Shammah (23:11): like Eleazar, he took his stand and defended a plot of land (field of lentils) against a troop of Philistines when others had fled
 - 4) There are two more honorable mentions just after this story in 23:18-23:
 - a. The first is Abishai (READ 23:18):
 - b. The second is Benaiah (READ 23:20-23)
3. What these men did for David was born out of the deep devotion, love and respect for him as their king

D. The fourth and final thing I want us to see today is that even with all their bravery and skill, the victories these mighty men won were not of their own doing but the LORD's

- 1. Back in 2 Samuel 8:14 after David had defeated many of Israel's enemies, we are told, "**And the LORD helped David wherever he went**"

2. And we see that here; twice in this passage we read that it was the LORD who brought about the victory for David and his men:
 - a. 23:10: **“and the LORD brought about a great victory that day”**
 - b. 23:12: **“and the LORD brought about a great victory”**
3. We also see this reflected in many of David’s psalms, including Psalm 21 (READ Psalm 21:1-19)

Conclusion

1. Like David’s might men, as Christians we are both servants and soldiers
2. Like David’s mighty men, we face enemies that are bigger and stronger than us:
 - a. We face earthly enemies—those who hate Jesus, hate what He stands for, and hate His people
 - b. But our most formidable enemy is spiritual (READ Ephesians 6:10-18)
3. Like David’s mighty men, our devotion to our King, Jesus, should be so great that we are willing to risk our own lives for His sake
4. Like David’s might men, the LORD will bring about the victory (Romans 8:26-39)