

(2 Samuel) the Army of Mighty Men

by David Guzik

David's kindness to Hanun and the Ammonites ultimately led to a great battle, where God gave David a warning about the consequences of staying behind and the importance of being in the center of God's will.

Duration: 24:06

Scripture: Joshua 1:9, 2 Samuel 10:12, Psalm 27:14, Isaiah 41:10, Matthew 6:33, Romans 8:28, 1 Corinthians 16:13

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare", "Courage In Faith"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the story of David and King Hanon. David sends ambassadors to bring comfort to King Hanon, but the advisors around the king suspect David of conspiracy and deception. Despite being surrounded and facing desperate circumstances, Joab, the leader of David's army, chooses to attack instead of surrender. He reminds the army that they are warriors of God and have the strength and power of the Lord behind them. Joab gives an inspiring speech, encouraging the army to be courageous and strong, emphasizing that courage is a choice. The sermon references Ephesians 6:10, which encourages believers to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

Transcript

Second Samuel chapter 10 presents to us the pinnacle of David's triumph. Next week, we have the sad task of detailing a great time of stumbling in David's life, his notorious adultery with Bathsheba, and even the murder that followed upon that adultery. But I want you to see and take something glorious from the pinnacle of David's triumph and see how there's going to be something in this chapter this morning that speaks to next week as well.

Let's get right off on it. Verse one. It happened after this that the king of the people of Ammon died and Hanun, his son, reigned in his place.

Then David said, I will show kindness to Hanun, the son of Nahash, as his father showed kindness to me. So David sent by the hand of his servants to comfort him concerning his father. And David's servants came into the land of the people of Ammon.

Last week, we saw a remarkable display of kindness from the heart of David, how he extended himself to this grandson of the late King Saul, the son of the late crown prince Jonathan. He extended his hand to this lame man named Mephibosheth. And it was very touching last week in Second Samuel nine, David's kindness towards Mephibosheth.

But we see in this week that David's kindness wasn't restricted just to the relatives of the household of Saul. It wasn't restricted just to the people of God. Here he is showing great kindness to the king of a pagan nation.

David could identify, he could empathize with this man, David knew what it was like to lose his own parents. And so when he heard that the king of the Ammonites had passed away and that his new son had come to reign in his place, David's heart went forth and he said, I'm going to send forth some ambassadors to bring a word of comfort and consolation and encouragement to this new king. And that's exactly what David did.

What a precious heart in King David. But look at how they were received. That's in verse three.

And the princes of the people of Ammon said to Haman, their Lord, do you think that David really honors your father because he has sent comforters to you? Has David not rather sent his servants to you to search the city, to spy it out and to overthrow it? It wasn't that funny. David sends these ambassadors from his kingdom with the best of intentions, with a totally pure heart to come and just bring a word of comfort and consolation to King Haman. But the advisers around the king whisper words of suspicion and conspiracy and intrigue into the into the heart of King Haman.

Haven't you always found it that liars always suspect others of lying, that those who love backstabbing and deception and intrigue often suspect it in other people? That's how it was for these advisers around King Haman. No doubt they were worthless men. No doubt they were men who would be deceptive and and backstabbers.

And so they suspect David of the same thing when there was no no hint of that in David whatsoever. So look at what their response is. You'll find it in verse four.

Therefore, Haman took David's servants, shaved off half their beards, cut off their garments in the middle of their buttocks and sent them away. When they told David he sent to meet them because the men were greatly ashamed, and the king said, wait at Jericho until your beards have grown and then return. Well, this was obviously a horrible insult to these ambassadors from David's kingdom.

First of all, it says that they shaved off half their beards. Now, you shouldn't think that what they did was they took the long beards of these men, you know, beards that were six inches long, and they made the beard three inches long. That's not what it means by cutting off half their beards.

It means that they took like the left side of the face and shaved it clean. And the other side was left. Not only was that a bad fashion statement, but it was a real act of contempt against these ambassadors.

Commentators will give you different reasons why the best reason I found is because only slaves were clean shaven in David's culture. And so to be clean shaven was the mark of a slave. And so they did this just to deride and to degrade these men, not to mention they gave him those very unflattering mini skirts to to carry all the way back to Jericho.

When these men came back humiliated into the kingdom of David and you see David's great generosity, great sensitivity of heart, you know, a lesser king than David would have seen this as a political opportunity. You know, I'll parade these men through the streets of Jerusalem and other cities of Israel, and boy, will I get the people outraged against the Ammonites. The politicians love to put other people at a poor display at their great expense for their own political advantage, but David wouldn't do this.

He said, stay at Jericho. Matter of fact, did you see what it said there in verse five? He sent to meet them. David went all the way down to Jericho to bring comfort and consolation to these men.

What a remarkable, generous hearts King David had. And he said, well, men, stay here, wait until your beards are grown out again and we can make them all a proper length and then come back. But David knew something that the Ammonites knew and the whole nation knew.

This wasn't just an insult to the ambassadors. It was an insult to David himself. You understand the principle, don't you? That an ambassador represents the nation.

He represents his king. And when you mistreat a king's ambassador, you may as well be mistreating the king himself. And so David, David knew that this was just as if it had been done to him.

He knew that this was an act of war. By the way, the same principle applies in our walk with God. When you are insulted, when you are mocked, when you are humiliated for the sake of Jesus Christ, honestly, it's just as if those people have done it to Jesus himself because you are representing him.

You are an ambassador of your king. Now, we have to be honest and say that not every humiliation, not every mocking that we endure as Christians is for the sake of Jesus. Peter said in one of his letters that we should be careful that we're not those who suffer, but not as evildoers.

In other words, he's saying, don't suffer as an evildoer. If you're going to suffer, suffer for the cause and the glory of Jesus Christ. And some Christians are out there offending other people and making other people not like them, not not because they're godly Christians, but because they're well, because they're obnoxious jerks.

And, you know, sometimes they'll take it upon them as well. You know, I'm just suffering for my Lord. No, you're not.

You're being obnoxious. You're being unfaithful to your Lord. Now, if you're suffering for righteousness sake, because you really are representing Jesus, then take it as a reproach on your Lord himself.

But not when we're just bringing it upon ourselves. But David understood that this was an attack against him. As a matter of fact, the people of Ammon understood this as well.

Look at verse six. So when the people of Ammon saw that they had made themselves repulsive to David, the people of Ammon sent and hired the Syrians of Beth Rehob and the Syrians of Zoba, 20,000 foot soldiers, and from King Mahah, 1,000 men, and from Ishtab, 12,000 men. I didn't add them up in my head, but that's a lot.

The Ammonites knew that this was an invitation to war. And so they said, we better hire some mercenaries. They spoke with the king of the Syrians and from these different cities of the Syrians, they sent forth a lot of troops.

And so this is a fearful army coming to face David and the Israelites. And if you notice here, verse seven says, now, when David heard of it, he sent Joab and all the army of the mighty men. I can't help but read that phrase.

And just there's just something that happens in my soul when I read that phrase, all the army of the mighty men. That sounds to me like an awesome collection of warriors of God, the army of the mighty men. Now

that phrase is used a few other times, never before in connection with David's work.

This is the first specific mention that we have of David's mighty men. We know they've been around before this. These were the men that started to come to David when he was on the run from King Saul before David was ever king.

When David hid away in a place called the Doolam Cave and David himself was discouraged. And then the Lord started bringing to him. The Bible says it in wonderful way in the book of first Samuel.

It says, then the Lord brought to David all those in the land who were distressed in debt and discouraged. Isn't that a great group to have come around you? But they came to David at a Doolam Cave and he led them and he transformed them and he worked a mighty work of God in their life. And they became the army of the mighty men.

Let me tell you, there is no, no group that could ever stand against David's army of the mighty men. These were warriors of God. I love how the rest of the Bible describes some of these mighty men of David.

One of them, second Samuel chapter 23 tells us about one of them named Adino the Esnite. He was a famous man among the mighty men of God. Second Samuel 23 says that he killed 800 men at one time.

That's a tough dude. I don't know about you. 800 men at one time.

When I get to heaven, I want to go up to the video archives in heaven and get the replay of Adino the Esnite killing 800 men at one time. That's got to be better than any Kung Fu movie you've ever seen on this earth. Another one of David's mighty men, First Chronicles 11, tells us about a man named Jashalbin.

He killed 300 men at one time. The same chapter tells us about another man named Benaiah. This man was remarkable.

Again, First Chronicles 11 tells us that Benaiah killed a lion in a pit on a snowy day. I love that. I mean, if it's not enough to kill a lion in a pit, he did it on a snowy day, which just had to make it all the more tough.

It also tells us that Benaiah killed an Egyptian warrior, a huge Egyptian warrior, and all Benaiah had in his hand was a staff. All he had was a stick. You know how it says he killed this huge Egyptian warrior? It says he killed him with the Egyptians own spear.

That's a tough man to do something like that. Well, these were the kind of men who were David's mighty men, and this was the army of the mighty men. I want you to notice something, though.

David was not leading them. Joab led them. And what did they do? Verse eight.

Then the people of Ammon came out and put themselves in battle array at the entrance of the gate. And it says then that in continuing on in the verse and the Syrians, Zobah, Rehab, Ishtab and Macha were by themselves in the field. In other words, in one place you have the army of the Ammonites.

In the other place out in the field, you have this huge army of the Syrians, this mercenary army. And where was the army of the mighty men? Verse nine will tell you. When Joab saw that the battle line was against him before and behind, he chose some of the choice men of Israel and put them in battle array against the Syrians.

Where were the battle lines drawn? Before him and behind. Let me translate that for you. They were surrounded.

There was an army at their back. There was an army at their front. They were surrounded.

There was no way of retreat. And surrounded like that, many men would think of surrender. Let's talk to our enemy.

Let's get the best terms we can. Why should there be a useless loss of life and a massacre of the army of Israel? The army can survive to fight another day. Isn't it prudent to surrender? I don't think that word was in Joab's vocabulary.

So you know what he said? He got together the leaders of his armies and men were surrounded. There's only one thing for us to do. And they're probably all thinking, all right, surrender.

And Joab says attack. That was his reaction. And so what did he do? He divided the army up into two groups.

Look at it there. Verse nine again. When Joab saw that the battle line against him before him behind, he chose some of the choice men of Israel and put them in battle array against the Syrians and the rest of the people he put under the command of Abishai, his brother, that he might put them in battle array against the people of Ammon.

And then he said, if the Syrians are too strong for me, then you shall help me. But if the people of Ammon are too strong for you, then I will come and help you be of good courage and let us be strong for our people and for the cities of our God. And may the Lord do what seems good to him.

So he says, let's divide up into groups. And if they're too strong for you, then I'll come help you. If they're too strong for me, then you come help me.

I want you to see it didn't even enter into his mind that the two of them together would be too strong for all of the army of Israel. That just didn't compute in Joab's mind. We're the army of the mighty man.

God is with us. We're an army that's not supplied primarily by great strength and military technology. The living God is behind us and we're warriors of God and we're going to go forth and win a great victory.

So let's split up and attack. That's exactly what they did. Look at how it continues on in verse twelve.

He gives this great speech, be of good courage and let us be strong for our people in the cities of our God. And may the Lord do what seems good to him. What a great speech before going into battle.

What inspiring words. First of all, he tells them, be of good courage and let us be strong. I want you to understand, friends, that's a choice that you make.

Courage isn't a feeling. It's a choice that you make. You say, I'm going to be courageous.

The circumstances are against me. It looks desperate, but God has made his strength available to me. Do you remember what it says in Ephesians 6:10? Be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.

God makes the resources of his power available to you. So you have a choice. You can take courage and be strong in the Lord.

Joab says that to the army of Israel. You do that. Secondly, he says, let us be strong for our people and for the cities of our God.

He's reminding them all they had to lose. There's a lot on the line, guys. Let's fight like warriors.

And secondly or thirdly, I should say, he concludes with May the Lord do what is good in his sight. Joab was absolutely persuaded that God wanted good for his people. And so God was going to bless because he wants good for his people.

Do you have the same assurance this morning that God wants good for you, for this congregation? What an appropriate word this is to us this morning. Be of good courage and let us be strong for our people and for the cities of our God. And may the Lord do what seems good to him.

I think that's a word from God for us as a congregation this morning. Well, look how the battle worked out. Verse 13.

Joab and the people who were with him drew near for the battle against the Syrians, and they fled before him. It wasn't even a fight. Isn't that amazing? That's when God's with the army.

You go forth and there's not even a battle. God just says, I'm blessing. I'm opening up the doors here.

They're getting out of the way. And the Syrians started fleeing. And then what did the Ammonites do on the other side? Verse 14.

And when the people of Ammon saw that the Syrians were fleeing, they also fled before Abishai and entered the city. So Joab returned from the people of Ammon and went to Jerusalem. Well, here's the problem.

The Syrians fled. The Ammonites went back into the protection of their city. And apparently Joab wasn't prepared to lay siege to the city.

So Joab goes back to Jerusalem. Now, the Syrians were made angry by this. They weren't going to take this kind of national humiliation.

So you're going to see beginning of verse 15 that they assembled a huge army of reinforcements to come against Israel. And look at what happens here. Verse 15.

Now, when the Syrians saw that they had been defeated before Israel, they gathered together, then had a day's rest and brought out the Syrians who were beyond the river. And they came to Helam and Shabbat. The commander had a day's army went before them.

And when it was told David, he gathered all Israel crossed over the Jordan and came to Helam. And the Syrians set themselves in battle array against David and fought with him. I find significance in this when Joab and the army of the mighty men went out to that city of the Ammonites.

By the way, the city was Raba. And they went out to the city of Raba. David did not go with them.

And there was not a decisive victory at Raba. The Syrian army was still there and ready to attack David. And the Ammonites were still in the walled protection of their city.

I think David understood something by this. He said, I sent out Joab and the army of the mighty men alone, and it wasn't a decisive victory. I mean, they were spared and praise God for that, but it was not a decisive victory.

That's why David said, I'm leading the next battle. You see that he said David went out against the Syrians. He did not leave it to Joab and the army of the mighty men.

And so do you see what the result was in verse 18? Then the Syrians fled before Israel and David killed 700 charioteers and 40,000 horsemen of the Syrians and struck Shabbat, the commander of their army who died there. And when all the kings who were servants that had a days or saw that they were defeated by Israel, they made peace with Israel and served them. So the Syrians were afraid to help the people of Ammon anymore.

When David went out to the battle, God blessed it. I want you to see that there's an important point here that ties together with what we're going to see next week. Many of you may be familiar with the whole scenario surrounding David's adultery with Bathsheba.

When David committed adultery with Bathsheba, Second Samuel 11 says that it happened at the times when the kings go out to battle that David stayed behind. Actually, he sent Joab and the army of Israel out to take care of this unfinished business at Rabbah in Ammon because they were still there. David did not go with them.

And it was while David should have been out with the army of Israel that he got into the trouble of the adultery with Bathsheba. And friends, I want you to see that in Second Samuel 10, God gave David a warning about this. He showed David, see what happens when you leave the army behind, see what happens when you're with the army.

When you left the army behind, they were preserved, but it wasn't a decisive victory when you went with the army. It was a glorious, decisive victory. Yet David did not listen to that warning.

And he still stayed behind. And Second Samuel 11. I think this shows us a principle that we'll conclude with this morning.

The safest place for the believer to be is in the center of God's will. Now, was it dangerous for David to go out to battle? Yes, it was. I can even imagine his advisors saying, David, you're getting a bit older now.

Maybe you stay back. You're not as young as you used to be. You know, every morning you complain about how sore you are when you get up, when we're out on military campaign.

Stay home on this one. But I want you to see that God gave David the warning and he didn't listen to it. The safest place for the believer to be is in the center of God's will.

So as crazy or as unexpected or as big as it seems sometime to go out and radically follow the will of God. We have to do it. Every one of us, I hope at some time in our Christian life, have prayed a prayer, something along these lines, Lord, I surrender it all to you.

I'll do whatever you want me to do. It's a it's a significant deal when the Lord calls you on that. When the Lord says, well, here's what I want you to do.

Will you do it? Will you be faithful to it? I think at those times we just need to trust that God means it for good to step out boldly and to follow his will. Father, that's our prayer together this morning. That you would show in our individual lives and Lord, especially at this point in our congregation.

The great glory that there is in radically following your will. Lord, we feel that you have revealed your will to us. Regarding my place in this congregation and my place.

In the world of ministry that you want me to do. Lord, we believe that you mean it for good. You mean it for good for this congregation.

And God, it fills us with a sense of excitement and anticipation. For how you're going to declare that the Lord were on the edge of our seat. Show it to us.

We can't wait to see it with our own eyes. We believe it now by faith and we're anxious to see it with our own eyes. We pray this in Jesus name.

Amen.

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