

David's Mighty Men — Obedience Without Command, and Eyes Opened at the Breaking of Bread

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2 Samuel 23 — The First Prize Belongs to the Lord Jesus

Second Samuel 23 opens with David's last words and moves into an account of the honors and distinctions earned by the men of his kingdom. It reads like an awards ceremony. And David knew, and said plainly in verse 5: although my house be not so with God. The first prize was not for anyone in David's house. It went to the one described in verses 3–4: he that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain. That is the Lord Jesus — God is light, and God is love, and those two, found together in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, are what John's first epistle identifies as the very character of God.

God sends rain on the just and on the unjust. Everything He sends, even what causes difficulty and trouble, comes from a God who so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. The rain comes because God loves, and even the flood in Noah's day came from the God who loves — who hides pride from man and desires every soul to repent and believe. The Lord Jesus is as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain. First prize belongs to Him. The greatest honour is His. That was what David's ceremony was really about.

Three Mighty Men — Obedience to a Longing, Not a Command

Verse 13 introduces three of the thirty chief men of David who came to him in the harvest time at the cave of Adullam, while the Philistines held Bethlehem. The house of bread — Beth lehem, house of bread — was in the hands of the enemy. And David said: oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate. That was all. Not a command. Not thou shalt go fetch me water. Not even a request directed at anyone in particular. He simply expressed a longing.

The three mighty men broke through the host of the Philistines, drew water from the well of Bethlehem by the gate, brought it to David, and set it before him. David would not drink it — he poured it out to the Lord, saying: be it far from me, O Lord, that I should do this. Is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives? That was obedience without a command. They were close enough to David to hear what he longed for, and they did it.

This is the pattern of the Lord Jesus laying down His life. You will not find in the Scripture a verse that says: thou shalt die for someone else. Search every commandment of the Law of Moses — it is not there. What you find in John 10:17–18 is: therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. This commandment have I received of my Father. There was a commandment — but not the kind of commandment that says thou shalt. It was the kind of commandment that the three mighty men heard when David said, oh that one would give me drink. The Father's longing, the Father's desire, was expressed, and the Son heard it. And He did it.

No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. This commandment have I received of my Father. — John 10:18

The Christian life is not primarily about keeping rules. It is about being close enough to the Lord Jesus — close enough to have our heads on His bosom as John did — to hear what He longs for. The three mighty men were that close to

David. They heard a longing and they obeyed. That is the happy Christian pathway.

Eyes Opened — John 9, John 4, John 21, Luke 24, and 1 Corinthians 11

The Lord Jesus opened the eyes of a man born blind in John 9. That man was born blind so that the glory of God could be displayed — it had nothing to do with him or his parents or anyone's sin. The Lord opens physical eyes, and He opens spiritual eyes. The woman at Jacob's well in John 4 spent the first part of her conversation with the Lord in blindness, answering like someone who cannot see. He said: give me to drink. She said: how dost thou, a Jew, ask drink of me, a Samaritan woman? He said: if thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him. She was blind. She said: thou hast nothing to draw with and the well is deep. And then He said: go, call thy husband. Her conscience was engaged. I have no husband. Thou hast had five husbands, and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband. Her eyes opened: I perceive that thou art a prophet. Her testimony was: come see a man who told me all things I ever did. Is not this the Christ?

In John 21 the disciples had gone fishing and caught nothing all night. The Lord stood on the shore and they did not know it was the Lord. They followed His instruction to cast the net on the right side, and the net was full, and John said: it is the Lord. Their eyes were opened by the doing of His word. In Luke 24 two disciples walked to Emmaus, their eyes holden so that they did not recognise Him walking beside them. He opened the scriptures to them. And then, at the table, He took bread and blessed it and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they recognised Him.

First Corinthians 11:23–26 records the institution of the Lord's Supper — the night in which He was delivered up, He took bread and the cup and said: this do

in remembrance of me. As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye announce the Lord's death until He come. Not as often as Christmas comes around. The word is often. And the disciples on the first day of the week gathered to break bread. Often, and on the first day of the week. The Lord established this supper in the very night of His greatest suffering, thinking not only of the salvation He was about to accomplish but of our wandering hearts — our eyes that droop and need to be opened. He had the breaking of bread in view as the means of opening our eyes. The instructor who asked: can you not just skip once? — that is what an unbeliever says. What did the Lord want from us, on the night He was delivered up, when He established this supper of remembrance? He wanted bread and cup, often, until He comes.
