

"... healing for all the nations" Revelation 22:2



"... the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified" Isaiah 61:3

The Tree of Life

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"... for the testimony of Jesus"
Revelation 1:9

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David's Mighty Men

Jason Newman

1 Chronicles 11:10-14, 20-23

We are going to spend sometime talking about David now. We are really not going to be talking about David as much as we are going to be talking about the men that followed David. David was a man of God, but that man of God influenced other men.

As we read the text before us, it reads as if these men were awesome in strength and power. The key to that might is in verse ten. To understand that key we must remember the history of David. David was sent by his father to check on his brothers and when he got there Goliath was there. The whole Israelite army was camped on the hillside scared of this man. David arrives there, a young man of only fifteen or sixteen. David looked at that giant with no fear in his heart and said who is this man, that would curse the name of the Living God? The man told David to be quiet. David said no, God is with me. He went and found the stones, called on the name of God and went looking for Goliath. Goliath sees David and says, I will feed you to the dogs. David replies, you will not for I come in the name of the Lord. David lets go of his sling. That stone was directed by God to go to the one place that was exposed on Goliath and down he falls. What a stunning victory!

Victory so many times just leads way to another battle. David had problems in his life and God gave him victory. More problems arouse and God gave him more victory. Then all of a sudden the enemy realized that this was a man to be reckoned with, a man who stood for God. The enemy then turned King Saul against him. The very man who David was working for and wrought deliverance for turned on him. He started chasing him all over the land of Israel. He had to take refuge in a cave. Here he was, the man of God, serving God, hiding in a cave. He brought deliverance to Israel, he sits with a bounty on his head. God still has a plan. God still has his hand on David. God anointed David to be king and nothing was going to change that plan.

David is sitting in the cave all alone. Word gets out in the countryside that David the deliverer is in the cave. Then we see the plan of God start to unfold. God will always work things for good. David is sitting there in the cave and these men start to come. Men who are drunks, men who are homeless. Men may have been criminals. Men separated from their families because of problems and stress. Men that nobody will have anything to do with in society. God had anointed David to be king. No matter the circumstances, David was to be kingly. He was a man after God's own heart. God's heart is about men being helped, changed, and living as restored men. So David started taking these men that society would have nothing to do with and started to invest in their lives. He started praying with them. He started to encourage them. It was not just one or two men, all of the sudden he has upwards of six hundred men in the camp. Out there in the middle of nowhere, Saul cannot find him, but God knows just where he is at. He starts using David for His glory.

These men enter into the battles that God has for David. They do battle with the Philistines. They start to protect the flocks and people around them. In short these men help David to act like a king. Saul is searching for David and cannot find him. David is king. He acting like a king. It is the same way today. The man that says that he is is a preacher will find a way to preach. The person who is called to be hospitable will find a way to be hospitable. It may not be the fullness of the task that God has for you, but you by the anointing and power of God will start to do it anyway. The enemy can hinder. He can not keep you from accomplishing what God has for you.

In this eleventh chapter, we have a list of some of the men that started to follow David. In the list there are forty names that did mighty things for David. Why is that? I said that the key was in verse 10. They wanted to see him as king. The prophet of God said that David would be king and these men took God at his word. A lot of people waited until David was sitting in Jerusalem before that called David king. Not these men. They saw by faith, and responded to David as king.

Here is the point for writing all this. We serve a greater David. He has a kingdom. We are in the same position as those men. Jesus Christ is not ruling the way that God the Father has said that He will. We need to make the same decision that those men made.

One of the men stood back to back with David and defended a barley field. That is like what so many churches have today. Not much. But it is ours, given to us by God. You are not taking it from us. God put us here. This is where we are standing. When all you can do is stand, you stand. You defend what is yours. Do you say, "The enemy can just have this!" No way! You stand up, back to back with Christ, and fight that thing, and get the victory. What does the verse say? That there were lots of Philistines. Apparently some number. A lot of people fled. Two stayed. The Scripture tells that one shall chase a thousand and two ten thousand. This is the power of agreement in prayer and purpose. A husband and wife are face to face in intimacy. But in dealing with the world and its problems, they stand back to back and pray for one another the problems that they face. Do not think that because you are not married that no one is standing with you. Christ Himself is your back-up and the two of you can defend your barley field! What does it say happened? God gave them not just deliverance, but great deliverance.

Next we see a man who stood up against three hundred men. These are enemies of David, and these are my enemies. What a thought! What courage! What faith! These three hundred somehow were hindering David from becoming king. "David would be king!" was the cry on this man's lips. Do we have the same battle cry? Christ will be king? No matter the odds, no matter the circumstances? See how simple the passage says it was? He slew them.

Lastly, we have Benaiah. He just threw all caution to the wind. He fought the two lion-like men from Moab. These men were fast, they were strong. He did not care. They would keep David from the throne if possible. They were in front of him. He took care of business. Then he did something some people would think was plain foolish. He got down in a pit with a caged lion. Then to be fighting a man seven and a half feet tall. A weaver's beam would have been a massive weapon. He went down with a small weapon in comparison, but killed the man with his own weapon! What is the point? Moab is always a picture of the flesh. Even as Benaiah overcame that man, with Christ and for Christ we will overcome the flesh and all of its evil desires! The lion? The devil is a defeated enemy. We have to only enter into the cage and take the captives from him! The picture of the Egyptian is the same. Nothing can keep the Gospel from going forth and saving and delivering people.

We should have one thought on our minds. Christ is to be exalted. He is to be King in all things, in all situations. When they were fighting along, they were not worrying about the sweat. They were not worrying about the reward. They only had one thought on their minds. Christ is King!

Where is the joy?

Jason Newman

Joel Chapter 1; Deuteronomy 7:6-16; 8:11-20

We will start our discussion of the book of Joel in the ninth verse. As you read this chapter you find that there are two phrases that are repeated. They are the meat offering and the drink offering. In the law of Moses there were five sacrifices that God commanded the children of Israel bring. Three of those sacrifices were pictures of Christ and the work that He did on the Cross. They also picture how that sin was dealt with, and restoration of man to a Holy God. The meat offering was not meat in the sense that it was flesh. It was grain of some sort. It was barley, wheat, corn. The drink offering was the fruit of the vine. They brought both of these offerings when they wanted to celebrate their relationship with God. They took the offering to the priest at the tabernacle or temple. They carried the grain in one hand, the drink in the other. The person would then present the offerings to the priest. He would take them then to the altar. The priest would then put them on the altar. Since it was grain and juice, it would not have the acrid, caustic smell of burning flesh. It would have a aromatic, sweet smell.

Now picture yourself walking past the tabernacle. You would smell the burning flesh of the sin offering. You knew that the sacrifice for sin was being made. As you came closer to that tabernacle though, you would begin to smell that pleasant smell of the grain and juice in celebration of the sin being covered. That someone had been restored to God, or was just happy to be serving God. That is the whole point of what Joel is trying to get the people to see. The evidence of God's judgment for their sin is in this. To be very specific, there is no joy in the camp. That is the picture of the meat offering and the drink offering being gone! One last point before we go on. The prophet here is not talking to people who do not know God or His ways. He is talking to people who had a understanding of the things of God. He is talking to us.

"For the joy of the Lord is your strength" (Nehemiah 8:10) Is that true for you? Another way of saying it is this: you can measure your strength by how much joy you have. The point Joel is trying to make is that it is your own fault that there is no joy in your life.

As we go back to the second verse we see the way that the judgment came. It was a natural phenomenon, but Joel was pointing to the spiritual reasons for why things were the way they were. This is the key to understanding so much of what goes on in our lives as Christians. God is spirit. His mode of operations always starts in the spiritual realm. We as men have to deal with this earth and the things of this earth. The physical reason for many things has a spiritual beginning or principal behind it.

The invasion of insects is described in great detail by the prophet. It is a horrible thing to read about what he is describing. Historians tell that these invasions would have so many insects, that it would blot out the sun. The prophet tells us that there were enough that they stripped the bark off the trees. There are stories of them eating holes in doors. This would have been a horrible and terrible thing to behold. This is just the beginning. When the bark is stripped off the tree, it dies. Then as the forest is dying, a lightning strike happens. Then it all burns in the forest fire. If you lived in the plains, the insects would eat the grass down to ground. Then as the wind blows, it picks up the dust. More and more dust would be stirred up. Then finally you have a windstorm.

The prophet is saying this is come as the judgment of God. The prophet calls to the different groups of people trying to get them to think and understand. In verse 5 he calls to the drunkards and the drinkers. Let us be clear here. The Bible condemns drunkenness in any form. That is not what the prophet is talking about here. He is trying to get them to see that their desire for normal and good

things has made to lose all clear headed spiritual understanding. The people are crying, but not about the right thing. All they see is the inconvenience of the food and drink being gone. They have no understanding that it is God trying to get their attention. All they can see is that they are suffering. God is pointing out the selfish, sinful attitudes that the people have. The people just continue to complain and miss what God is saying and doing. Instead of turning back to God and losing the "me first" attitude, they just complain and fret.

One of the main points of the book of Joel is that God has purpose in the things He does. He does not do things just out of spite. When God brings judgment there is always a reason. He does not bring it out of uncontrolled vengefulness or bitterness. God gives very specific and determined reasons why judgment will come.

As you read of the covenant that God made with Israel in Deuteronomy, you find that He explained all these things to the people. "If you hearken ... Keep ... Do" Look at the blessings that God promised. No sickness, no famine. Defeat of all the enemies that they would face. Blessing upon blessing.

He was just as clear as to what would happen if the people did not do as God had commanded them. They forgot what God had done for them and what He had promised to do for them. They thought it was in their own strength and power that things were as good as they were. God was very clear as to what the consequences of such thoughts and behaviors would be. They would perish even as the nations which had gone before them perished.

As we relate that back to our passage in Joel, we find that the people had lost the joy that comes from listening and serving God. Joel is asking, "Where is the joy?" "Where is the thankfulness?" When the Holy Spirit comes He brings joy as one of the fruits of His presence. That is not what I am talking about here. I am talking about the joy that come from the realization that we are the sons and daughters of the King. That I have been and will be changed into the image of Christ.

What is the joy of the Lord? It is knowing the truth about who you are and where you are going! That all this world is under my feet. We should have joy no matter what is going on around us. Happiness comes and goes as a emotion. Joy on the other hand is a choice that we make. It comes from knowing we are doing the will of God. You can choose to lie around in your self-pity, but there will come a time where God will get your attention.

The insects are a picture of the sin that comes and smothers the joy of fellowship with God. Notice how that there is a wave of insects? Sin always starts small and then increases. By the time that you have lost the joy of your relationship with God, something has happened. Just like those insects that started small, sin does also. As the insects matured and destroyed more and more, so does sin. That should give you insight as to why sin is serious. Even as the insects brought death to everything so does sin. Sin always ends in death. That is the point of judgment. It is to show us the death that is still to come. To arrest us and get our attention as to what we are doing to our relationship to God.

What is the answer? Where is hope for change? Be ye ashamed. Not shame of getting caught. A shame that will not allow you to continue to sin against a holy God. We need to get past other people knowing and realize that God knows. That is the secret to overcoming sin. We go to God and say what we did was wrong. Then we act like what we did was wrong. What joy then fills a man's heart to know that death is gone and he is in fellowship with God.

Finally, God has done what He has to do in the cross of Christ. We have to avail ourselves of the provisions of that Cross. That is where the joy is at.

An Apostle's Supreme Ambition

by T. Austin-Sparks

Philippians 3:10

There are few words in his writings which reveal how committed to the Lord Jesus this man was. The whole context is one consummate outpouring of his heart to the One whom he said had "apprehended" him, and he focuses all in a brief half sentence: "That I may know him."

The impressive thing about this expressed ambition is the time at which it is made. Here is a man who has had a revelation and knowledge of Jesus Christ greater than any other man up to that time. That knowledge commenced whence as he said, "it pleased God to reveal his Son in me". That beginning devastated him, and sent him into the desert to try to grasp its implications. Later he had been "caught up into the third heaven and shown *unspeakable* things, which (he said) were not lawful to be uttered". Between, and around those two experiences, there is evidence of an ever growing knowledge of Christ. Here, after all that, near the end of his life, he is crying passionately: "That I may know him."

The very least that we can say about this is that the Christ in view was a very great Christ indeed, who outstrips the greatest capacity and comprehension of man. This stands in such tremendous contrast to the limited Christ of our recognition and apprehension! How very much more there is in Christ than we have ever seen! But we must break down our verse. It is divided by its main words, and can be stated in its four phrases.

(1) The all-governing passion: "That I may know him."

(2) The effectual power: "The power of his resurrection."

(3) The essential basis: "The fellowship of his sufferings."

(4) The progressive principle: "Conformed to his death."

1. THE ALL-GOVERNING PASSION

"That I may know him."

Here a little study in words is both helpful and necessary. In the original language of the New Testament there are two words for 'knowing' or 'knowledge' or 'to know'. They run in numerous occasions and connections right through the New Testament.

One of these words has the meaning of knowledge by information; being told, reading, by report. It is more the knowledge which comes by observation, study, searching, or talk. It is rather knowledge about things, persons, etc. The other word carries the meaning of personal experience, intimate acquaintance; and *inward* knowledge. Sometimes there is a prefix which gives the meaning of "full knowledge" (*epi*). The second of these words and meanings is that which Paul is using and employing here: 'That I may have or gain more of the knowledge of Him which is personal experience by personal acquaintance, by living, firsthand relationship with Him.'

This removes everything from the realm of mere theory, the intellect, and being told. It is the result and effect of an act of the Holy Spirit within. That is why Paul links with this knowledge "the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings". It is powerful knowledge, born of deep experience. And this is the only *true* knowledge of Christ! It is planted or wrought deep in the inner life.

2. THE EFFECTUAL POWER

"The power of his resurrection."

While there *is* a future aspect of the whole statement, that is, the consummation in glory, we *must* understand that in each of these phrases Paul is thinking of this life. Even in the next verse, where he speaks of *attaining* to the "outresurrection from among the dead", he is thinking primarily of present spiritual and moral out-raising. He had known something of this power already. His conversion was such. Again and again, in what he called "deaths off" he had known it. Perhaps greatest of all were his experiences in Asia and Lystra (II Corinthians 1:9; Acts 14:19-20).

Resurrection power and life *are* the knowledge of Christ. This is how we know Him, and this is available for every believer. It is for endurance, for overcoming, for fulfilment of ministry, for maintaining the Lord's testimony in the world; for every need which demands it in relation to the interests and glory of Christ. It puts life on a supernatural basis. It is the power of *His* resurrection, the greatest miracle in history.

3. THE ESSENTIAL BASIS

"The fellowship of his sufferings."

In this connection there are some things that we must at once set aside. There were sufferings of Christ which we do *not* share, and are not called upon to share, although sometimes there seems to be a very fine and thin line between them.

We do not share the atoning sufferings of Christ. There is a whole realm of suffering which was His alone. The work of man's redemption was His alone, *for us*. When He who was without sin was made sin for us He was alone, even God-forsaken in that eternal moment. Upon that fact the whole truth of His unique Person hangs, and the whole system of *perfect* sacrifice rests; the *spotless* Lamb.

But when all that is accepted and established, there *are* sufferings of Christ in which we have fellowship with Him. We also, *for His sake*, may be despised and rejected of men. We can be discredited, ostracised, persecuted, mocked, tortured, and even "killed", both in an act and "all the day long". Paul speaks of a residue of Christ's sufferings which he was helping to fill up for "His body's sake which is the church". This is another, and different, area and system of suffering. Paul looked upon this as an honour and something in which to rejoice, because it was for the One whom he so deeply loved. But he also saw that this suffering *with* and *for* Christ provided the basis for knowing Christ and the power of His resurrection. This Apostle would agree that only those who know *this* fellowship truly know the Lord. We know that! It is perfectly evident that real usefulness in a spiritual way comes out of the winepress, and "they that have suffered most have most to give" There is nothing artificial about the fruit of Christ.

4. THE PROGRESSIVE PRINCIPLE

"Becoming conformed unto his death."

It is important in understanding the Apostle to realise that he was not thinking of conformity to Christ's death as the end of all else. His real meaning was that he should increase in the knowledge of Christ, know the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings by becoming conformed to His death. His death - Christ's - was behind, something at the beginning, and the spiritual history of the believer is a working *back* to what that death meant. It meant the end of the "old man", crucifixion to the world mind and will; the closing of the door to a whole system which was not Christ-centered and Christ-governed.

All this had been stated and presented in Paul's earlier letters; but it was a meaning which had to be progressively made real and true in spiritual experience. The meaning of Christ's death - Paul taught - was to be the inner history of the believer, and this would work out - progressively - in the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings. So that, *by* being conformed to His death, he

would come to the fuller knowledge of Him and of that Divine power. It is ever so.

The all-governing passion opens the way for the effectual, and effectuating power, by the essential basis, through the progressive principle of conformity to His death.

Now may the saving grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the Love of God the father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, rest remain and abide with us all, now and forevermore. Amen

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