

Faint not

Part 1

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[00:00:00] 2 Samuel 23, verse 8 2 Samuel 23, verse 8 2 Samuel 23, verse 8 [00:01:30] 2 Samuel 23, verse 8 2 Samuel 23, verse 8 [00:02:18] 2 Samuel 23, verse 8 2 Samuel 23, verse 8 [00:03:11] 2 Samuel 23, verse 8 We have today also heard a bit about reward. Reward for faithfulness and reward in connection with the result of the work. And this chapter is also about rewards. About David valuing, appreciating what these mighty men had done for him.

[00:04:03] And it was encouraging for me that the first hymn we sung tonight was also in line with the exercise I had on my heart. We've sung, Savior, we long to follow Thee, daily Thy cross to bear. Here were men that followed David, and we know that David is a picture of the true David, the Lord Jesus, whom we follow. And most of these events that are mentioned in this chapter were done when David was still rejected. So, they followed him, sharing the rejection with David.

And that is our task today in the time we live, to follow the Lord Jesus and sharing his rejection because he still is rejected in this earth. And count all else, whatever it be, unworthy for our care. [00:05:03] These were men that had probably given up a lot of things and gone to David, the rejected king, and followed him on his way. And we will find other things in this hymn that will come before us later. I think we can say that this chapter gives us an illustration a bit of what will happen at the judgment seat of Christ. When the Lord is judging, valuing, appreciating what has been done for him.

Because it is interesting that these men were not, at least the Bible doesn't tell us that they were praised or something like that. When they actually did this, but David, this chapter says in verse 1, Now these be the last words of David. David, at the end of his life, looks back what these men had done for him. [00:06:01] And now he writes it down to value and appreciate what they had done. And so, it is not so important if today, in this life, what we do for the Lord Jesus is valued, recognized, understood.

But there will be a moment when everything will be rightly considered by our true David.

And it is remarkable that when we find such chapters in the Bible that tell us about what different people were doing. Chapters with names where things are mentioned. It is not something like a collective way of praising them. Just saying, well you were all wonderful and I appreciate that. But he is individually speaking about each one in a different way.

[00:07:02] We have a similar chapter which I would like to mention as comparison. And that is in the book of Nehemiah. When we come to the third chapter where we get all the names and activities when the wall was built. And there we see how individual faithfulness was rewarded.

We said already that faithfulness is what will be rewarded. And we see in this third chapter of Nehemiah that God is, for example, noticing the quality of our work.

In verse 1 of Nehemiah 3 it says, Then Elisha, the high priest, rose up with his brethren, the priests, and they built the sheep gate. They sanctified it and set up the doors of it, even unto the tower of Mea. They sanctified it unto the tower of Hananel.

[00:08:05] And in verse 3 it says, But the fish gate did the sons of Hazaniah build, who also laid the beams thereof, set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof. And if we compare these two verses carefully, we find that in the first case there's no mention of locks. The door was there, but it couldn't be locked. When we know the book of Nehemiah, we know that Elisha had a relationship to the enemies of the people. So he was probably not so interested to have all the doors locked to this influence. But in verse 3 it speaks of other people who did the complete work. So the quality of what we do will be noticed.

But also God notices the quantity, how much we do. If we read in verse 11, it says, Malkiah the son of Harim and Hashub the son of Pahat Moab repaired the other piece, or the second piece, and the tower of the furnaces. [00:09:09] Or in verse 13 in the second half, And a thousand cubits on the wall. So God noticed how much they did. And also the energy in which we do what we are taught to do.

We also find mentioned in verse 20, for example, it says, After him, Barak the son of Zabai earnestly repaired the other piece. He's the only man in this chapter of whom it is said that he did this work earnestly. And also the personal faithfulness is noticed.

For example, in verse 10, it says, And next unto him repaired Jehoiada the son of Harumath even over against his house. Which we find several times in this chapter. [00:10:01] Personal faithfulness. Because what use would it be to repair the wall somewhere in the town if it is falling to pieces opposite my house. So the personal faithfulness starts in my family, in the surroundings in which I am. And we have the same here in 2 Samuel 23. We find that the writer, that David, first speaks of three persons.

He mentions particularly. Then comes a group that is called the 30. And among this group of the 30, there were also three which were particularly mentioned. And then we find different things said about them. The first group that comes before us here in verse 8 following, are those that are characterized by the fact that they fought more or less alone. Because the people of Israel fled. [00:11:01] They were faithful in fighting even when others had given up.

And that is, I think, a question for us today. Are we standing for the truth? We've spoken about that. Are we holding fast to the truth of his word even when generally speaking, the majority have left, have gone, have given up to fight?

The first that is mentioned is in verse 8. It says of him, he lift up his spear against 800 whom he slew at one time.

One man fighting against 800.

That is really, here's one outstanding example. He is fighting alone against 800.

[00:12:04] We would say, this is impossible. Nobody can do that.

We said in our song, life, strength, and grace in thee we have.

Or teach us the power to know of risen life with thee. Certainly it was impossible. But that is exactly the situation where God can act. Could we, to see this in another instant, could we turn to the book of Judges in chapter 7, where we have this story of Gideon.

We talked about it last night. I'm going a step back in that history.

Gideon was to fight the Midianites. And then it says in verse 2 of Judges 7, and the Lord said unto Gideon, the people that are with thee are too many.

[00:13:05] Do you know how the situation was? There were 32,000 Israelites and 135,000 Midianites.

Which was a relationship of one to four. Which means one Israelite had to fight four Midianites. And God says, no, that's too many. God's calculation is different from ours. We would have said, well, we are the minority. But God says, that's too many. Because lest Israel warned themselves against me, saying my own hand has saved me. Because then they could have said, well, even if we were in a minority, we were so strong and so successful to beat this army that was in a majority.

And so God said to Gideon, whoever is fearful and afraid, let him return.

[00:14:04] Whoever is fearful and afraid, let him return.

Faint not.

If there were those that fainted, that had fear, they should go.

And the result was, and there returned of the people 20 and 2,000 and there remained 10,000.

If you'll think of this situation before our eyes, this General Gideon with his 32,000 men says, if anybody is fearful, let him go home. Maybe he thought maybe 100 are going home or so, but most of his people went home and there were only 10,000 left.

By the way, there was a commandment in the law of Israel [00:15:03] that said when they were going to fight and if somebody was fearful, he should go home.

Why? So that he does not make all the others fearful. But the law says, if one man, not if 22,000.

If one man.

Maybe there is such an exception, but here it was not the exception, but the rule. Most went. Now we have a relationship of one to 13, 14. One Israelite had to fight against 13 or 14 Midianites. But still

God says, these are too much, too many.

And it was another way of finding the right people. In the first case, they could decide it on their own. In the second one, God was telling who was to go and who was to stay. And he said, those that just take the water in passing, [00:16:03] realizing that we are in war, put on the one side. But those that comfortably sit down at the water, put to the other side. And there were left 300 people.

A relationship of one to 450.

That was impossible, wasn't it? God said, by the 300 men, I will save you.

When we come to the point that we say, but that is impossible, God says, wonderful. Because that is the case when you realize that you can do nothing without me.

And later, we heard it yesterday, we find that even these 300 men did not have to fight because the Lord did it for them. But a similar case we have here. At least 800 who misled.

So we can say at the top list, so to say, of these people, [00:17:03] is one who realizes I'm not able to do anything.

The enemies are so overwhelming. This number is so great.

And the Lord gave him the strength to overcome these. So he was at the head of this group.

The second, in Numbers 9, after him was Elias, the son of Dodo the Aohite, one of the three mighty men with David, when they defied the Philistines that were gathered together to battle, and the men of Israel were gone away.

When in David's days, the Philistines came, Goliath came up, and he defied the people of Israel.

But here were these mighty men, and they defied the Philistines. They did not faint because they saw all these Philistines. [00:18:06] Three men, one of three mighty men, and the men of Israel were gone away.

For the first time, but not for the last, we read in this chapter that the Israelites had left. They had gone.

They were no longer fighting.

When Paul says, faint not, is it not a reason sometimes for us to faint, to get discouraged when we see so many having given up to fight at all? But here was this man. He arose.

There is this energy of faith in an outwardly discouraging situation. He arose and smote the Philistines until his hand was weary.

These mighty men of David were not some superheroes.

[00:19:01] They were men of like passions as we are, trusting their Lord, and his hand was weary. He

really was bodily exhausted after this fight. He put everything into it, and we have seen last night in 2 Corinthians that Paul told us a bit about his ministry, and Paul knew a bit about that, fighting until his hand was weary.

But it also says, and his hand clave unto the sword.

The sword he had in his hand in which he was fighting, maybe for hours, had become more or less one with him.

When we take something into our hands very forcefully and keep this for a very long time, it will nearly be impossible to open our hands again. And so he was one with this sword, which is, of course, [00:20:03] for us, a picture of the Word of God. And this reminds us of something we had in previous years when we had the first epistle of John. In 1 John 2, it says something about the young man. 1 John 2, verse 14, in the middle, I have written unto you, young men, because you are strong, and the Word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.

Why were they strong and had overcome the wicked one? Because the Word of God abideth in them.

Clave to the sword.

Are we so well-versed in the Scriptures?

Are we living in and with the Scriptures so that they are more or less a part of us, so we will be able to fight this fight?

[00:21:05] When the enemy attacks, do we have a word from Scriptures that tells us what to do?

Or do we have to get a concordance and try to find if the Bible says anything about it? Here were those, this man, his hand clave unto the sword, and the Lord wrought a great victory that day.

These mighty men all knew that it was not their fight and it was not their victory.

We have had this also in our hymn, life, strength, and grace in thee we have. It's his victory.

When in a future day the Lord will reward faithfulness in the one or the other, we will not take any honor for ourselves, [00:22:01] but we will give it back to him, so to say, throw down our crowns before him and say it was his strength. It was what he had done in their lives. They did not say, well, we were so mighty warriors. David said that, but not these men themselves. They said it was the Lord that wrought a great victory this day, but because one man was faithful while all the others had left. And the people returned after him only to spoil.

When we read this on the first sight, it sounds a bit negative. They had gone away, had done nothing, but afterwards they came and collected the spoil. But probably we could also give it a positive side to it.

Is it not often so in the life of faith that the faithfulness and the energy of one man might draw others with him?

How often in the Bible when we have kinds of times of reformation, [00:23:08] of the God working through his spirit, there was very often one faithful man. We had mentioned Nehemiah. He had this exercise in his heart. He went to Jerusalem and said, let us build. And then others went on and helped him. And so often this has been experienced also in the history of Christianity that there were faithful men who drew others with them. And the Lord mentions this.

Yes, they had gone away, but they had seen the faithfulness of one man, and they returned.

They came back.

Would it not be a wonderful thing if because of your personal faithfulness in your life and ministry and in the area the Lord has given you, others who had given up would be revived again, would return, [00:24:02] and again try to be faithful to the Lord because they have seen the Lord wrought a great victory that day. How wonderful that would be. And that is also part of this reward. Not only for we spoke about it today, reward for faithfulness and a reward that has to do with the result of the ministry. And one result of the faithfulness of this Eleanza was that others returned, were there again, and joined the fight.

And we come to the next one of these three in verse 11. And after him was Shammah, the son of Ege the Herorite, and the Philistines were gathered together into a troop. There they are again, these enemies, the Philistines, which particularly speak about enemies on the religious area. They were there in a troop.

And there was this man Shammah. [00:25:02] There was a piece of ground full of lentils.

Well, was that worth fighting for?

If it had been something valuable, but it was only a piece of ground full of lentils. And the rest of the people said, well that's not worth fighting for. It says the people fled from the Philistines.

But not so Shammah. He stood in the midst of the ground and defended it and slew the Philistines. It was, for him as an Israelite, it was part of the heritage. So it doesn't matter if it was a more valuable one or a smaller one. It was part of the heritage and he was not willing to give it up. But maybe not also as a practical application for us see something different in it. We spoke about the doctrine of Christ. We spoke about the fact how important it is to fight for the honor of the Lord [00:26:01] on his person and his work.

And have to reject everything that denies or does not confess the doctrine of Christ. And probably every true believer who loves the Lord Jesus would understand that.

But what about the grounds of lentil? What about all the other things in scripture which are also part of the Bible, which are also the truth, and which is given up by the majority of professing Christians? Are we still prepared to fight for that?

What about the truth of the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace? Are we still willing to fight for that? Or do we say, well, all these meetings, assemblies are individual, independent units. We don't have to care for that. [00:27:02] Well, that's not true. A lot of people of God have given up fighting for that.

What about this field of lentils?

What about the verbal, literal inspiration of the Bible?

Are we willing to fight for that?

Nearly in most denominations you will find that Bible criticism has crept in, in smaller or greater form.

Are we still holding to the truth that the Bible was literally inspired by God?

A field of lentils, maybe.

And probably, when at the judgment seat of Christ, the Lord is going to reward the shammass, [00:28:01] I'm sure many of them will be female.

What about the truth of the position of woman, of the deportment of woman, of the hair, of the head covering, all these things we find in scripture, which Christianity in general has given up? Are we still willing to fight for these fields of lentils, if I may call it thus? Here was a man, shamma, who thought this is important because it is a heritage, because it is from God, because we have got it from him and his word. We are going to stand for it, even if all the others have gone, faint not.

Are you willing, dear sister, just to say, well, that is what scripture says and that's what I'm to faithfully realize in my life, independent of what others think, independent of what others might think about it, I'm going to fight for it. [00:29:01] Fight does not mean attack anybody. It's simply this piece of ground, the heritage of God, what God has given us to fight for that. And David had seen this man on this field of lentils. He stood in the midst of it, defended it when all the others left. I'm sure the Lord today notices also every individual brother or sister who is trying to defend this field of lentils.

And the Lord wrought a great victory. Again, also shamma says, well, it was not me. I was not the great victor in this scene. It was the Lord. I simply faithfully did what I was told to do. I defended the heritage, what God has given us and what others would rob us.

And because of this faithfulness, the Lord granted him a great victory.

[00:30:02] Later in this chapter, we will come to another group of men who were fighting particularly in difficult circumstances. The first group was fighting alone. The third group is fighting in difficult circumstances. But in between, a second group is very precious and very special. It says that three of the 30 went down and came to David in the harvest time unto the cave of Adalem.

We said they were mostly with him in the time when he was rejected, when he was in that cave. The harvest time, it was hot, difficult situation, difficult time, and there these men were with David, and the Philistines were in Bethlehem.

And then suddenly, as David, standing there in the heat of the day, watching down to Bethlehem, he saw the well of Bethlehem, [00:31:05] of which he probably as a young man had often drunk, and he had a desire in his heart. He longed for this water.

And he simply says, Oh, that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is

by the gate. He simply uttered his desire.

He didn't command anything.

He didn't say to any of his soldiers, Go down and get me this water. He simply said what was in his heart, the desire of his heart. And for these three men, this was enough to go.

They went down.

The three mighty men break through the host of the Philistines and brought this water to David.

And it was so valuable for him that he didn't drink it, but poured it out as a drink offering unto the Lord.

[00:32:03] And it says at the end, as if to put an exclamation mark behind it, These things did these three mighty men. How is it with us?

If we know what the Lord desires, if we know what would be pleasing to him, is that enough for us? Or would you still ask, Well, where does it say in Scripture that I have to do that? Do you need a command for everything you do or not do? Or is the desire of the Lord what he would be pleased about enough for you to do it, to go? This is real devotion as we had in the song, We are not our own but thine. Then we do not need for everything we do a command, but we simply want to be pleasing him. And we know what he wants, his desire, [00:33:01] and so we go and get it for him. Something that he values very much, that is done for him voluntarily, pleases his heart.

We could give a very simple example of everyday life.

The mother says to her daughter that she should wash the dishes.

And she does so.

The mother is pleased that the daughter has been obedient to what she told her to do. But maybe she doesn't say anything.

Maybe the daughter notices that she is tired and there are all the dishes. And now the daughter says, Well, if I now wash the dishes, my mother will be pleased by that. And she may do so.

And this will be more valuable in a certain sense than just being obedient to something you are told to do. [00:34:03] And it's so with the Lord. When we know what he wants and would be pleased on, there were these three men.

And David says, These things did these three mighty men. It was not such an enormous victory, fighting a couple of thousand warriors, but simply going down in a dangerous situation. Never. That's the point. But bringing something to David because his heart longed for it.

How wonderful that would be if the Lord could say in the future day to you and me, There was something I wanted from you that pleased me. And you did it without anybody telling you. And I've seen that your heart was devoted to me. And that is something that is very precious to him. [00:35:04]

We come with verse 18 to the second. The third group then is Abishai, the brother of Joab. He lifted up his spear against 300 and slew them and hid a name among the three. We see that there is a going down in numbers. Every detail is mentioned. The first one had to fight 800.

And here 300.

But nevertheless, the Lord notices it.

He will not say, He knows what you and I can do. He will not say, Why haven't you done what somebody else has done? But there was this situation in your time, in your situation. There were these 300 men, which was as well an impossible thing for one single man. And he did it with the Lord's power. He could fight and be victorious.

With the 20th verse, we come to a very interesting and special character, [00:36:04] which we know from other parts of the Old Testament. Abishaiah, son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man of Capsule who had done many acts.

Well, we all have different histories where we come from. Some may be brought up in Christian families, Christian parents. Others may be saved from the world out of an unbelieving family.

Here is a man who had a father that was a warrior, that was a faithful man himself who had done many acts. First now, I would speak of the position of the parents. It was already mentioned in the Bible reading today. What are we going to pass on to our children?

Property, wealth, possessions, or faithfulness in following the Lord, an example they could follow.

[00:37:10] Here was a man who had a father that had given him an example how to be a mighty warrior, because he was one himself. How good that is if we had this desire in our hearts not only to teach our children necessary things, but also to let them see in our own lives the example of faithfulness and what it means to stand for the truth. But the other side is, the side of the children, the fact that you have or have had faithful parents and you watched them.

This alone doesn't make you a faithful warrior yourself. You have to take up the sword yourself. You have to follow in their footsteps. [00:38:03] And that is said what Benaiah did. He slew two lion-like men of Moab.

He went down also and slew a lion in the midst of a pit in time of snow. Here we see that what I said, we have particularly difficult circumstances fighting a lion, if it was an animal or if it was an allusion to persons, lion-like men of Moab. Nevertheless, in each case, it was in itself difficult enough. But now it was a day of snow that made it more difficult to do such a fight. And the Lord notices that.

If the days in which we stand for the truth, in which we fight for him and want to follow him in faithfulness, if these days are particularly difficult, if the circumstances are particularly difficult, he will notice that, he will mention it and take note of it. [00:39:02] And of this man, Benaiah, it also says that he slew an Egyptian.

The Egyptian, we know Egypt, the picture of the world. And there we have this Egyptian man, he slew him. And if we read how he did it, I think we will notice it is very similar to what David had done.

When David fought Goliath, he only had his shepherd's weapon to kill the giant, and he cut his head with Goliath's own sword.

And as what this man does, he has only his staff, and he kills this Egyptian with his own spear.

So could we not say that he follows closely in the footsteps of his Lord?

Seeing he had overcome, in a certain way, the enemy is defeated because Christ is over one. [00:40:05] But we are still overwinning and following the Lord in that way, using the weapons he used. And it says about this man, once again such an expression that makes sure that David wants to emphasize what he did, these things did Benaiah, the son of Jehoiada. He said, well, that was special what he did. Even if he is not mentioned among the first three, David says it was very special what he did. And we find some interesting note here. In verse 23 it says, and David set him over his guard.

There are two possible translations. I take the one of the King James Version first. And David set him over his guard. Benaiah was, so to say, the bodyguard of David. And this he actually was.

[00:41:03] Later he was the commander of this special forces that had to guard the king. But that brings us back to the doctrine of Christ. There was one who was the guard of David, who took care that nobody was attacking David, that nobody was attacking our true David, his person, which we spoke about.

People denying the truth of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And there were those and have always been those among the saints who had this position in a particular way. We have seen in 2 John its responsibility of everyone in some sense. But there were those that guarded in particular about his person, that had a special discernment when errors were brought up, pointing them out, as John did to this sister.

But it could also mean, the Darby translation has, and David set him in his counsel. [00:42:07] There is this intimate fellowship, communion, which is even more than fighting for something. He had a special place with David.

He was communing with him, he was talking with him about all the things that were on his heart. Do we not have this desire, so to say, to be of the counsel of our true David, to have this fellowship with him, to understand more what he wants us to do, of his counsel, of his ideas, of scripture, seeking to have this special relationship with the Lord. Benaiah was, maybe more than others, a man that had the confidence of David.

There is a number of names mentioned then, of which we do not read what they did. Maybe you think you are among this number, nobody notices what you do. [00:43:06] But the Lord knew about it.

Practically speaking, when David was writing these names, David knew what they had done, even if he didn't write it down. And you can be sure the Lord knows what you've done. He will not forget it, even if there is only a name mentioned. But our true David knows everything that's done for him.

We read the last two verses because there are two interesting names mentioned. One, in verse 37,

was Nahari the Beerothite, the armor-bearer to Joab, the son of Zeruah.

Yes, Joab is not mentioned in this list of the mighty men of David.

He was his general a long time, but he was a man fighting only for his own honor and for his own things. [00:44:02] And in the end, he even left David. He's not mentioned here. In the worldly records, if there are any left, he may be found for some of the successful wars he had done. But he's not mentioned among David's faithful warriors. But there is one man who was his armor-bearer, who was all the time together with him. But here he is.

David saw this man was not influenced by Joab, even if he was so closely with him.

We have a similar example in the New Testament in the book of Acts, chapter 13.

In Acts 13, it says in verse 1, Now there were in Antioch in the assembly which was there prophets and teachers, Barnabas and Simeon, who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, the Cyrenian, [00:45:02] and Manin, foster-brother of Herod, the Tetrarch. There was one brother, a prophet in the assembly, who was a foster-brother of Herod. To put it into our language, he had gone to school with him, he had gone to college with him, and the one became a wicked king, and the other a useful servant in the assembly of Antioch. Maybe you are also in close connection with people at school, at college, at work, which are ungodly.

But that faithfulness has to do with not being influenced by these things. But simply going on in faithfulness, and the Lord will see that as well. He will say, yes, I know. I have seen that at your place of work, there were all these ungodly people at school, and they always tried to influence you, in some way or other, always tried to draw you away. [00:46:02] But I've seen that you have been faithful to the Lord, and that's what He wants us to be. Yes, and there's one more man.

The last name in this list is Uriah the Hittite.

I don't know what David felt when he was writing that name. I suppose you know who that was.

Uriah was the husband of Bathsheba, and after David's adultery with that woman, he killed this man, tried to get rid of him.

And Nathan pointed out the sin to him, David confessed it, and we can read in some of the Psalms, 51, 32, what was going on in his heart, and God forgave him.

[00:47:01] But this thing followed David. God, in His words, says several times, David was the man after God's own heart. Well, then comes, except in the case of Uriah the Hittite. But now, the end of his life, looking back, he said this was one of the mighty warriors of David. One of the mighty men he had.

And maybe you are in a situation where something happened to you, and you say, that was unrighteous, what happened to me. That was unjust.

People didn't see my real motives. They judged me wrongly, and it was never put right. Maybe not on this world.

But there will be a moment when everything will be put right, and where God will say, I have seen that you have been faithful, [00:48:01] even if others did act in an unrighteous way with you, and have not seen who you really were. There is one that sees if we are righteous, if we are faithful to the Lord. So what a wonderful thing that is, as we had it in our hymn. Savior, we long to follow Thee, daily Thy cross to bear. There will be a moment when everything that was done for him will be appreciated by the Lord.

And may he find us in such of these ways. May he find us as those standing for the truth, and above all, doing things of which we know, that the Lord Jesus will be pleased by them. Not asking for commands, directions for doing these things, but simply out of love for the Lord.

Everything that is done for him will find its right reward at this day. [00:49:03] But the other thing which we saw tonight is no power in ourselves. Situations are, humanly speaking, impossible. And the power and the honor of any victory belongs to him.