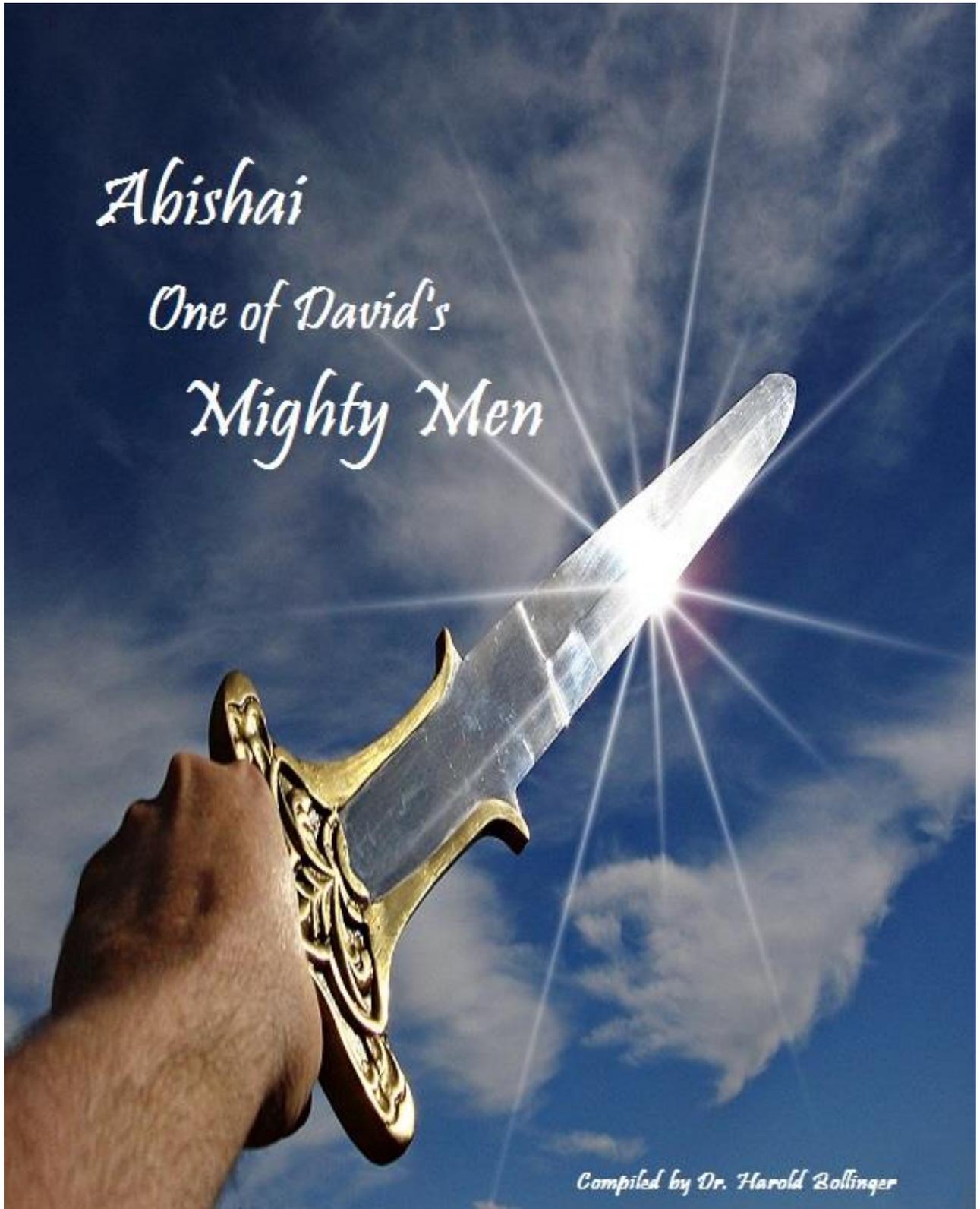


Abishai

One of David's

Mighty Men



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Overview

ABISHAI was the son of Zeruiah, David's sister.

David's sisters were Zeruiah, and Abigail. And the sons of Zeruiah; Abishai, and Joab, and Asahel, three. 1 Chronicles 2:16

The sons of Zeruiah were Abishai, Joab, and Asahel, three.

We are now come to the register of the children of Israel that distinguished people, who were to dwell alone, and not be reckoned among the nations.

But now, in Christ, all are welcome to his salvation who come to him; all have equal privileges according to their faith in him, their love and devotedness to him. All that is truly valuable consists in the favour, peace, and image of God, and a life spent to his glory, in promoting the welfare of our fellow-creatures.

These Scriptures show Abishai to be the nephew of David. He took many chances of losing his life to help David to pursue the throne.

Throughout this study, you will notice that Joab, also a great warrior, assisted Abishai in these victorious battles.

Abishai was one of David's mighty men.

2 Samuel 23:18

And Abishai, the brother of Joab, the son of Zeruiah, was chief among three. And he lifted up his spear against three hundred, and slew them, and had the name among three.

David once earnestly longed for the water at the well of Bethlehem. It seems to be an instance of weakness. He was thirsty; with the water of that well he had often refreshed himself when a youth, and it was without due thought that he desired it.

Were his valiant men so forward to expose themselves, upon the least hint of their prince's mind, and so eager to please him, and shall not we long to approve ourselves to our Lord Jesus, by ready compliance with his will, as shown us by his word, Spirit, and providence? Abishai, with great danger, brought David the water.

But David poured out the water as a drink-offering to the Lord. Thus he would cross his own foolish fancy, and punish himself for indulging it, and show that he had sober thoughts to correct his rash ones, and knew how to deny himself.

Did David look upon that water as very precious which was got at the hazard of these men's blood, and shall not we much more value those benefits for purchasing which our blessed Saviour shed his blood? Let all beware of neglecting so great salvation. 1 Samuel 23:8-39

Abishai seeks Saul's life.

1 Samuel 26:6-8

Then answered David and said to Ahimelech the Hittite, and to Abishai the son of Zeruiah, brother to Joab, saying, who will go down with me to Saul to the camp? And Abishai said, I will go down with thee.

So David and Abishai came to the people by night: and, behold, Saul lay sleeping within the trench, and his spear stuck in the ground at his bolster: but Abner and the people lay round about him.

Then said Abishai to David, God hath delivered thine enemy into thine hand this day: now therefore let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear even to the earth at once, and I will not smite him the second time.

How soon do unholy hearts lose the good impressions convictions have made upon them! How helpless were Saul and all his men! All as though disarmed and chained, yet nothing is done to them; they are only asleep.

How easily can God weaken the strongest, befool the wisest, and baffle the most watchful! David still resolved to wait till God thought fit to avenge him on Saul.

He will by no means force his way to the promised crown by any wrong methods. The temptation was very strong; but if he yielded, he would sin against God, therefore he resisted the temptation, and trusted God with the event. 1 Samuel 26:6-8

David Made King in Hebron (2 Samuel 2:1-7)

After the death of Saul, many went to David at Ziklag, 1Chronicles 12:22, but he trusted in God who promised him the kingdom, to give it in his own time and manner.

Yet assurance of hope in God's promise, will quicken pious endeavours. If I be chosen to the crown of life, it does not follow, Then I will do nothing; but, Then I will do all that God directs me.

This good use David made of his election, and so will all whom God has chosen. In all our journeys and removes, it is comfortable to see God going before us; and we may do so, if by faith and prayer we set Him before us. God, according to the promise, directed David's path.

David rose gradually: thus the kingdom of the Messiah, the Son of David, is set up by degrees; he is Lord of all, but we see not yet all things put under him.

Abishai pursues and kills Abner

Joab also and Abishai pursued after Abner: and the sun went down when they were come to the hill of Ammah that lieth before Giah by the way of the wilderness of Gibeon. 2 Samuel 2:24

Both Parties Retreat (2 Samuel 2:18-24)

Death often comes by ways we least suspect. We are often betrayed by the accomplishments we are proud of! Asahel's swiftness, which he presumed so much upon, did him no service, but hastened his end.

Asahel Slain by Abner (2 Samuel 2:25-32)

Abner appeals to Joab concerning the miserable consequences of a civil war. Those who make light of such unnatural contests, will find that they are bitterness to all concerned.

How easy it is for men to use reason, when it makes for them, who would not use it, if it made against them!

See how the issue of things alter men's minds! The same thing which looked pleasant in the morning, at night looked dismal.

Those who are most forward to enter into contention, will repent before they have done with it, and had better leave it off before it be meddled with, as Solomon advises.

This is true of every sin, oh that men would consider it in time, that it will be bitterness in the latter end!

So Joab and Abishai his brother slew Abner, because he had slain their brother Asahel at Gibeon in the battle. 2 Samuel 3:30

Abishai defeats the Edomites

Moreover Abishai the son of Zeruah slew of the Edomites in the valley of salt eighteen thousand. (I Chronicles 18:12)

Our good fight of faith, under the Captain of our salvation, will end in everlasting triumph and peace. The happiness of Israel, through David's victories, and just government, faintly shadowed forth the happiness of the redeemed in the realms above.

Abishai defeats the Ammonites

2 Samuel 10:10-14

And the rest of the people he delivered into the hand of Abishai his brother, that he might put them in array against the children of Ammon.

And he said, if the Syrians be too strong for me, then thou shalt help me: but if the children of Ammon be too strong for thee, then I will come and help thee.

Be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people, and for the cities of our God: and the Lord do that which seemed him good.

And Joab drew nigh, and the people that were with him, unto the battle against the Syrians: and they fled before him. And when the children of Ammon saw that the Syrians were fled, then fled they also before Abishai, and entered into the city. So Joab returned from the children of Ammon, and came to Jerusalem.

They that are at war with the Son of David, not only give the provocation, but begin the war.

God has forces to send against those that set his wrath at defiance, [Isa 5:19](#), which will convince them that none ever hardened his heart against God, and prospered. Christ's soldiers should strengthen one another's hands in their spiritual warfare.

Let nothing be wanting in us, whatever the success be. When we make conscience of doing our duty, we may, with satisfaction, leave the event with God, assuredly hoping for his salvation in his own way and time.

Abishai seeks the life of Shimei

2 Samuel 16:9

Then said Abishai the son of Zeruah unto the king, why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head.

Once and again David spared Saul's life, while Saul sought his. But innocence is no defence against malice and falsehood; nor are we to think it strange, if we are charged with that which we have been most careful to keep ourselves from. It is well for us, that men are not to be our judges, but He whose judgment is according to truth.

See how patient David was under this abuse. Let this remind us of Christ, who prayed for those who reviled and crucified him.

A humble spirit will turn reproaches into reproofs, and get good from them, instead of being provoked by them. David the hand of God in it, and comforts himself that God would bring good out of his affliction. We may depend upon God to repay, not only our services, but our sufferings.

2 Samuel 19:21

But Abishai the son of Zeruah answered and said, Shall not Shimei be put to death for this, because he cursed the Lord's anointed?

David Pardons Shimei

Those who now slight and abuse the Son of David, would be glad to make their peace when he shall come in his glory; but it will be too late. Shimei lost no time.

His abuse had been personal, and with the usual right feeling of good men, David could more easily forgive it.

Abishai leads a division of David's army against Absalom.

2 Samuel 18:2-5

And David sent forth a third part of the people under the hand of Joab, and a third part under the hand of Abishai the son of Zeruiah, Joab's brother, and a third part under the hand of Ittai the Gittite.

And the king said unto the people, I will surely go forth with you myself also. But the people answered, Thou shalt not go forth: for if we flee away, they will not care for us; neither if half of us die, will they care for us: but now thou art worth ten thousand of us: therefore now it is better that thou succour us out of the city.

And the king said unto them, what seems best to you, I will do.

And the king stood by the gate side, and all the people came out by hundreds and by thousands. And the king commanded Joab and Abishai and Ittai, saying, Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom. And all the people heard when the king gave all the captains charge concerning Absalom.

Absalom's Army Defeated (2 Samuel 18:1-8)

How does David render good for evil! Absalom would have only David smitten; David would have only Absalom spared. This seems to be a resemblance of man's wickedness towards God, and God's mercy to man, of which it is hard to say which is most amazing. Now the Israelites see what it is to take counsel against the Lord and his anointed.

He Is Slain (2 Samuel 18:9-18)

Let young people look upon Absalom, hanging on a tree, accursed, forsaken of heaven and earth; there let them read the Lord's abhorrence of rebellion against parents. Nothing can preserve men from misery and contempt, but heavenly wisdom and the grace of God.

David's Over-Sorrow (2 Samuel 18:19-33)

By directing David to give God thanks for his victory, Ahimaaz prepared him for the news of his son's death.

The more our hearts are fixed and enlarged, in thanksgiving to God for our mercies, the better disposed we shall be to bear with patience the afflictions mixed with them.

Some think David's wish arose from concern about Absalom's everlasting state; but he rather seems to have spoken without due thought. He is to be blamed for showing so great fondness for a graceless son.

Also for quarrelling with Divine justice. And for opposing the justice of the nation, which, as king, he had to administer, and which ought to be preferred before natural affection. The best men are not always in a good frame; we are apt to over-grieve for what we over-loved.

But while we learn from this example to watch and pray against sinful indulgence, or neglect of our children, may we not, in David, perceive a shadow of the Saviour's love, who wept over, prayed for, and even suffered death for mankind, though vile rebels and enemies.

Abishai Overthrows Sheba

2 Samuel 20:1-22

And there happened to be there a man of Belial, whose name was Sheba, the son of Bichri, a Benjamite: and he blew a trumpet, and said, we have no part in David, neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: every man to his tents, O Israel.

So every man of Israel went up from after David, and followed Sheba the son of Bichri: but the men of Judah clave unto their king, from Jordan even to Jerusalem.

And David came to his house at Jerusalem; and the king took the ten women his concubines, whom he had left to keep the house, and put them in ward, and fed them, but went not in unto them. So they were shut up unto the day of their death, living in widowhood.

Then said the king to Amasa, Assemble me the men of Judah within three days, and be thou here present. So Amasa went to assemble the men of Judah: but he tarried longer than the set time which he had appointed him.

And David said to Abishai, Now shall Sheba the son of Bichri do us more harm than did Absalom: take thou thy lord's servants, and pursue after him, lest he get him fenced cities, and escape us.

And there went out after him Joab's men, and the Cherethites, and the Pelethites, and all the mighty men: and they went out of Jerusalem, to pursue after Sheba the son of Bichri.

When they were at the great stone which is in Gibeon, Amasa went before them. And Joab's garment that he had put on was girded unto him, and upon it a girdle with a sword fastened upon his loins in the sheath thereof; and as he went forth it fell out.

And Joab said to Amasa, Art thou in health, my brother? And Joab took Amasa by the beard with the right hand to kiss him.

But Amasa took no heed to the sword that was in Joab's hand: so he smote him therewith in the fifth rib, and shed out his bowels to the ground, and struck him not again; and he died.

So Joab and Abishai his brother pursued after Sheba the son of Bichri. And one of Joab's men stood by him, and said, He that favoured Joab, and he that is for David, let him go after Joab.

And Amasa wallowed in blood in the midst of the highway. And when the man saw that all the people stood still, he removed Amasa out of the highway into the field, and cast a cloth upon him, when he saw that every one that came by him stood still. When he was removed out of the highway, all the people went on after Joab, to pursue after Sheba the son of Bichri.

And he went through all the tribes of Israel unto Abel, and to Beth-maachah, and all the Berites: and they were gathered together, and went also after him. And they came and besieged him in Abel of Beth-maachah, and they cast up a bank against the city, and it stood in the trench: and all the people that were with Joab battered the wall, to throw it down.

Then cried a wise woman out of the city, Hear, hear; say, I pray you, unto Joab, Come near hither, that I may speak with thee. And when he was come near unto her, the woman said, Art thou Joab? And he answered, I am he. Then she said unto him, hear the words of thine handmaid. And he answered, I do hear.

Then she spake, saying, they were wont to speak in old time, saying, they shall surely ask counsel at Abel: and so they ended the matter. I am one of them that are peaceable and faithful in Israel: thou seekest to destroy a city and a mother in Israel: why wilt thou swallow up the inheritance of the Lord?

And Joab answered and said, far be it, far be it from me that I should swallow up or destroy. The matter is not so: but a man of mount Ephraim, Sheba the son of Bichri by name, hath lifted up his hand against the king, even against David: deliver him only, and I will depart from the city.

And the woman said unto Joab, Behold, his head shall be thrown to thee over the wall.

Then the woman went unto all the people in her wisdom. And they cut off the head of Sheba the son of Bichri, and cast it out to Joab. And he blew a trumpet, and they retired from the city, every man to his tent. And Joab returned to Jerusalem unto the king.

Sheba's Rebellion

One trial arises after another for our good, till we reach the place where sin and sorrow are for ever done away. Angry disputers misunderstand or misconstrue one another's words; proud men will have every thing their own way, or wholly refuse their assistance.

The favour of the many is not to be depended upon; and what have others to expect, when Hosanna to the Son of David was soon changed to crucify him, crucify him?

Amasa Slain by Joab

Joab barbarously murdered Amasa. The more plot there is in a sin, the worse it is.

Joab contentedly sacrificed the interest both of the king and the kingdom to his personal revenge. But one would wonder with what face a murderer could pursue a traitor; and how, under such a load of guilt, he had courage to enter upon danger: his conscience was seared.

Sheba Takes Refuge in Abel

Justly is that place attacked, which dares to harbor a traitor; nor will the heart fare better which indulges rebellious lusts that will not have Christ to reign over them. A discreet woman, by her prudent management, satisfied Joab, and yet saved the city.

Wisdom is not confined to rank or sex; it consists not in deep knowledge; but in understanding how to act as matters arise, that troubles may be turned away and benefits secured.

A great deal of mischief would be prevented, if contending parties would understand one another. Let both sides be undeceived.

The single condition of peace is, the surrender of the traitor. It is so in God's dealing with the soul, when besieged by conviction and distress; sin is the traitor; the beloved lust is the rebel: part with that, cast away the transgression, and all shall be well. There is no peace on any other terms.

Abishai saves David from being slain by a Philistine

2 Samuel 21:17

But Abishai the son of Zeruah succored him, and smote the Philistine, and killed him. Then the men of David sware unto him, saying, Thou shalt go no more out with us to battle, that thou quench not the light of Israel.

Battles with the Philistines

These events seem to have taken place towards the end of David's reign. David fainted, but he did not flee, and God sent help in the time of need.

In spiritual conflicts, even strong saints sometimes wax faint; then Satan attacks them furiously; but those who stand their ground and resist him, shall be relieved and made more than conquerors.

Death is a Christian's last enemy, and a son of Anak; but through Him that triumphed for us, believers shall be more than conquerors at last, even over that enemy.

May the favor of God rest upon you, and may you be victorious in every battle.

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

References:

Verse Concept: Matthew Henry's Concept Bible Commentary.