

The Well of Bethlehem

2 Samuel 23: 13-17.

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The beautiful story of the three men who drew water from the well of Bethlehem, is preceded by the account of the great exploits of the three mightiest amongst David's mighty men. Whether they are the same three who broke through the host of the Philistines and drew the water from the well, is not very clear, and probably immaterial. It is, however, important to mark the difference between their great deeds, and the service rendered to David in obtaining the water from the well.

Adio was the chief among the captains. His name means "ornament." Doubtless he filled his exalted position with credit to himself, and advantage to the King, for he had successfully attacked eight hundred of David's enemies, at one time (verse 8).

Eleazar defied the Philistines in the day when the men of Israel turned back. Single handed he arose and smote the enemy, and when victory was assured, the people of, Israel, who had left Eleazar to face the enemy alone "returned after him," but "only to spoil." The Lord wrought a great victory through Eleazar, and the Israelites reaped the fruits of victory (verses 9, 10).

Shammah is famous as having "stood in the midst of the ground and defended it," in the day when others fled (verses 11, 12).

In the conflicts of the Lord's people we see these different forms of service. There are times when the Lord calls for an *attack* upon the forces of evil, as in the case of Adino. There are occasions when there is *spoil* to be gained through conflict, as in the day of Eleazar's victory. So too there are times when we are called to stand our ground, and act on the *defensive*, as it was in the day of Shammah's mighty deed.

How important, in their times and seasons are such mighty deeds. However, whether in David's day, or in our own day, one thing marks such deeds, they are for the benefit of people, as well as for the glory of the King. When, however, we come to the three mighty men who drew the water from the well, we have a very different form of service. If the victories, we have considered, had the blessing of the people in view, this touching act of service was wholly for the benefit of the King.

These three mighty men "came to David in the harvest time unto the cave of Adullam" (13). It seems as if they left the world in the day of its plenty, to identify themselves with David in the day of his poverty and reproach.

David was in the hold, while a garrison of the Philistines occupied the place of David's early home. David, thinking of the well by the gate of Bethlehem, from which doubtless he had often drawn water in his youth, expresses his longing for a refreshing draught from the well. "Oh," says he, "that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!" It is no command that requires obedience; it is no call for service; it is only the expression of his longing desire. And yet this expressed desire calls forth this devoted act of love in a way that no command would have done.

Many would have been ready to risk their lives in carrying out some service for the benefit of the kingdom; but these mighty men were ready to face death in order to do something that was wholly for

the gratification of the desire of David. They broke through the host of the Philistines, drew water from the well, and brought it to David. This act of devotion delighted the heart of David, and he sees in it a sacrifice of which the Lord alone is worthy. Hence, refusing to drink the water, he pours it out before the Lord.

We, in our day, and according to the spiritual principles of the day, may know at times what it is to attack the powers of evil, to gain spoil from the enemies' ranks, and to stand on the defensive in the conflict for the truth. We, too, may fight the Lord's battles, but how much do we know of this higher service that does something for the heart of Christ alone? "Oh, that one would give me," says David. Are there not occasions when we can give something to the One who gave everything for us? When as at Bethany, in the day of the Lord, they did something for the One who had done so much for them — when "*they made Him a supper*" who had made a feast for all the world. Do we count it a rare privilege to be able to give to Christ that which will minister joy to His heart?

Was not Mary's service of this elevated character, when, six days before the Passover, she anointed the feet of the Lord with her costly ointment and wiped His feet with the hairs of her head? Was she not, in the face of the hatred of enemies and the murmurings of friends, refreshing the heart of the despised and rejected Son of David, against whom, at that very moment, the world was plotting with murderous hate?

And even as the water secured by these devoted men, was poured out before the Lord, so the odour of Mary's ointment goes up before the Lord as a sweet savour. It filled all the house where they were sitting.

Is not David's "Oh, that one would give *me*" a faint anticipation of the Lord's dying request, "Do this in remembrance of *Me*"?

When we answer to this request, we are not fighting the Lord's battles, we are not getting spoil, we are not defending the truth but we are doing something wholly for Christ; we are ministering to His heart by responding to His love. May we know better what it is to draw water from the well and pour it out before the Lord for the joy of His heart.