

Joab the Rogue, Eliam the Royalist

“Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed: but he that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded” Proverbs 13:13

David's Mighty Men



“These also are the chief of the mighty men whom David had, who strengthened themselves with him in his kingdom, and with all Israel, to make him king, according to the word of the LORD concerning Israel” 1 Chronicles 11:10

Rogue and Royalist, Each a Role Model

Joab and Eliam were both among David's *“men of war”* 1 Chronicles 12:38 but only Eliam was one of the elite warriors known as *“the mighty men”* 2 Samuel 23:8. See graphic¹. Joab had the *potential* to qualify for *“the mighty men”* but he never did. The reason is that Joab was a rogue while Eliam was a royalist. Nevertheless, *both* men are role models for today's believer, as will be shown.

The Devil - Evil but Admirable

This writer was told many years ago that the devil knows more about scripture than any Christian. That statement is true but it was intended to dissuade believers from focusing on *“the words of God”* plural Numbers 24:4, 16, 1 Chronicles 25:5, Psalm 107:11, John 3:34, Revelation 17:17 about which dissension might arise over different Bible versions and think only in terms of the fundamentals as set out in, say, a church constitution and over which therefore no dissension can arise.

Yet although *“your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour”* 1 Peter 5:8, much about the devil is admirable, even if for the wrong reasons:

The devil's command of scripture is admirable. No-one should be put off from that reality by means of the underhanded tactic of guilt by association. The devil knew to cut out *“to keep thee in all thy ways”* Psalm 91:11 in tempting the Lord Jesus Christ, Matthew 4:6, Luke 4:10-11. The Christian should aim for the best possible command of the scriptures such that he can refer to them 24/7.

“And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up” Deuteronomy 6:6-7.

The devil's boldness is admirable. The devil is bold even with God.

“Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face” Job 1:9-11.

“And Satan answered the LORD, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face” Job 2:4-5.

The Christian should aim for boldness with God.

“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” Hebrews 4:16.

The devil's obedience is admirable. It is immediate, total and without objection such as “Lord, me first” Luke 9:59, 61 or “Not so, Lord” Acts 10:14.

“And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD” Job 1:12.

“And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life. So went Satan forth from the presence of the LORD, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown” Job 2:6-7.

The Christian should aim for obedience to God that is immediate, total and without objection.

“And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them” Matthew 21:6.

The devil's persistence indeed steadfastness is admirable.

“your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” 1 Peter 5:8. The devil works at stalking the intended victims 24/7. He is steadfast in that respect.

The Christian should be steadfast in serving the Lord Jesus Christ

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” 1 Corinthians 15:58.

In sum, the Christian has a role model even in his enemy for command of scripture, boldness, obedience and persistence. Likewise, the Christian has a role model in Joab, his roguery notwithstanding.

Joab - Evil but Admirable

Joab was admirable for his command of scripture².

“Then Joab sent and told David all the things concerning the war; And charged the messenger, saying, When thou hast made an end of telling the matters of the war unto the king, And if so be that the king's wrath arise, and he say unto thee, Wherefore approached ye so nigh unto the city when ye did fight? knew ye not that they would shoot from the wall? Who smote Abimelech the son of Jerubbesheth? did not a woman cast a piece of a millstone upon him from the wall, that he died in Thebez? why went ye nigh the wall? then say thou, Thy servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also” 2 Samuel 11:18-21 with Judges 9:52-54.

Joab was admirable for his boldness.

Joab was bold in initiative, in leadership in battle and even before the king.

“And David said on that day, Whosoever getteth up to the gutter, and smiteth the Jebusites...he shall be chief and captain...” 2 Samuel 5:8.

“And David said, Whosoever smiteth the Jebusites first shall be chief and captain. So Joab the son of Zeruiah went first up, and was chief” 1 Chronicles 11:6.

“When Joab saw that the front of the battle was against him before and behind, he chose of all the choice men of Israel, and put them in array against the Syrians: 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 seemeth 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...” 2 Samuel 10:9-14.

“And Joab came into the house to the king, and said, Thou hast shamed this day the faces of all thy servants, which this day have saved thy life, and the lives of thy sons and of thy daughters, and the lives of thy wives, and the lives of thy concubines...Now therefore arise, go forth, and speak comfortably unto thy servants: for I swear by the LORD, if thou go not forth, there will not tarry one with thee this night: and that will be worse unto thee than all the evil that befell thee from thy youth until now. Then the king arose, and sat in the gate. And they told unto all the people, saying, Behold, the king doth sit in the gate. And all the people came before the king: for Israel had fled every man to his tent” 2 Samuel 19:5, 7-8.

Note of course that Joab was *not* admirable for his obedience or his steadfastness. He disobeyed his Commander-in-Chief, committed serial murder and rebelled against his word *“for the king’s word was abominable to Joab”* 1 Chronicles 21:6. See these scriptures.

“And Abner said unto David, I will arise and go, and will gather all Israel unto my lord the king, that they may make a league with thee, and that thou mayest reign over all that thine heart desireth. And David sent Abner away; and he went in peace...Then Joab came to the king, and said, What hast thou done? behold, Abner came unto thee; why is it that thou hast sent him away, and he is quite gone? Thou knowest Abner the son of Ner, that he came to deceive thee, and to know thy going out and thy coming in, and to know all that thou doest. And when Joab was come out from David, he sent messengers after Abner, which brought him again from the well of Sirah: but David knew it not. And when Abner was returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside in the gate to speak with him quietly, and smote him there under the fifth rib, that he died, for the blood of Asahel his brother” 2 Samuel 3:21, 24-27.

“And the man said unto Joab, Though I should receive a thousand shekels of silver in mine hand, yet would I not put forth mine hand against the king’s son: for in our hearing the king charged thee and Abishai and Ittai, saying, Beware that none touch the young man Absalom...Then said Joab, I may not tarry thus with thee. And he took three darts in his hand, and thrust them through the heart of Absalom, while he was yet alive in the midst of the oak. And ten young men that bare Joab’s armour compassed about and smote Absalom, and slew him” 2 Samuel 18:12, 14-15.

“And say ye to Amasa, Art thou not of my bone, and of my flesh? God do so to me, and more also, if thou be not captain of the host before me continually in the room of Joab...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...” 2 Samuel 19:13, 20:10.

“And he conferred with Joab the son of Zeruiah, and with Abiathar the priest: and they following Adonijah helped him” 1 Kings 1:7.

Prompting his crimes, Joab’s disobedience to and rebellion against *“the king’s word...abominable to Joab”* 1 Chronicles 21:6 really spelled his end for *“Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed...”* Proverbs 13:13. See these scriptures.

“Moreover thou knowest also what Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me, and what he did to the two captains of the hosts of Israel, unto Abner the son of Ner, and unto Amasa the son of Jether, whom he slew, and shed the blood of war in peace, and put the blood of war upon his girdle that was about his loins, and in his shoes that were on his feet. Do therefore according to thy wisdom, and let not his hoar head go down to the grave in peace” 1 Kings 2:5-6.

“Then tidings came to Joab: for Joab had turned after Adonijah, though he turned not after Absalom. And Joab fled unto the tabernacle of the LORD, and caught hold on the horns of the altar. And it was told king Solomon that Joab was fled unto the tabernacle of the LORD; and, behold, he is by the altar. Then Solomon sent Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, saying, Go, fall upon him. And Benaiah came to the tabernacle of the LORD, and said unto him, Thus saith the king, Come forth. And he said, Nay; but I will die here. And Benaiah brought the king word again, saying, Thus said Joab, and thus he answered me. And the king said unto him, Do as he hath said, and fall upon him, and bury him; that thou mayest take away the innocent blood, which Joab shed, from me, and from the house of my father...So Benaiah the son of Jehoiada went up, and fell upon him, and slew him: and he was buried in his own house in the wilderness” 1 Kings 2:28-31, 34. Note that clinging to the altar showed that even in his desperation, Joab’s command of scripture was such that though it didn’t help him, he knew Exodus 21:14 **“But if a man come presumptuously upon his neighbour, to slay him with guile; thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die.”**

Joab was nevertheless admirable for his dedication in producing men “expert in war” 1 Chronicles 12:33, 35, 36, Song of Solomon 3:8.

The men of Benjamin were noted for prowess in battle.

“And the children of Benjamin came forth out of Gibeah, and destroyed down to the ground of the Israelites that day twenty and two thousand men...And Benjamin went forth against them out of Gibeah the second day, and destroyed down to the ground of the children of Israel again eighteen thousand men; all these drew the sword” Judges 20:21, 25.

The men trained by **“the general of the king’s army...Joab”** 1 Chronicles 27:34 beat them soundly.

“And Abner the son of Ner, and the servants of Ishbosheth the son of Saul, went out from Mahanaim to Gibeon. And Joab the son of Zeruiah, and the servants of David, went out, and met together by the pool of Gibeon: and they sat down, the one on the one side of the pool, and the other on the other side of the pool. And Abner said to Joab, Let the young men now arise, and play before us. And Joab said, Let them arise...And there was a very sore battle that day; and Abner was beaten, and the men of Israel, before the servants of David...And Joab returned from following Abner: and when he had gathered all the people together, there lacked of David’s servants nineteen men and Asahel. But the servants of David had smitten of Benjamin, and of Abner’s men, so that three hundred and threescore men died” 2 Samuel 2:12-14, 17, 30-31.

Though Joab was not one of **“the mighty men”** 2 Samuel 23:8 no fewer than *three* men close to him were. That was a distinct achievement among David’s **“men of war”** 1 Chronicles 12:38.

“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” 2 Samuel 23:18 with 1 Chronicles 11:20.

“Asahel the brother of Joab was one of the thirty; Elhanan the son of Dodo of Bethlehem” 2 Samuel 23:24 with 1 Chronicles 11:26.

“Zelek the Ammonite, Naharai the Beerothite, armourbearer to Joab the son of Zeruiah” 2 Samuel 23:37.

Note finally that unlike King David who dwelt **“in the city of David”** 1 Chronicles 11:7, Joab dwelt **“in his own house in the wilderness”** 1 Kings 2:34. There Joab no doubt dedicated himself 24/7 to producing men **“expert in war”** 1 Chronicles 12:33, 35, 36, Song of Solomon 3:8 and where Joab accustomed these men to campaign conditions as Uriah said **“my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord, are encamped in the open fields”** 2 Samuel 11:11. Joab also practised on-the-job training with **“ten young men that bare Joab’s armour”** 2 Samuel 18:15. The training paid off. See 2 Samuel 2:12-14, 17, 30-31 above. The Lord too practised on-the-job training. **“And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach”** Mark 3:14.

The Christian can and should therefore do likewise as Paul exhorted Timothy.

“And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” 2 Timothy 2:2.

Eliam the Royalist – Righteous and Admirable

Eliam Wronged Manifold Manifested “the patience of Job” James 5:11

Note these scriptures.

“And David sent and enquired after the woman. And one said, *Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?* And David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in unto him, and he lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness: and she returned unto her house” 2 Samuel 11:3.

“And it came to pass in the morning, that David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah. And he wrote in the letter, saying, *Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten, and die...*And the men of the city went out, and fought with Joab: and there fell some of the people of the servants of David; and Uriah the Hittite died also” 2 Samuel 11:14-15, 17.

“And when the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband” 2 Samuel 11:26.

“Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die. And Nathan departed unto his house. And the LORD struck the child that Uriah’s wife bare unto David, and it was very sick...And it came to pass on the seventh day, that the child died” 2 Samuel 12:14-15, 18.

“And when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his ass, and arose, and gat him home to his house, to his city, and put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died, and was buried in the sepulchre of his father” 2 Samuel 17:23.

David’s sin with Bathsheba wronged Eliam manifold. Eliam lost his son-in-law, his grandson and his own father and saw his daughter in deep distress mourning for his son-in-law whom his own Commander-in-Chief had murdered and whom Nathan soundly rebuked as follows.

“Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon” 2 Samuel 12:9.

Yet Eliam was like Job. **“In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly”** Job 1:22.

Herein is the role model example for the Christian as Peter explains.

“For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God” 1 Peter 2:19-20.

Eliam Righteous, a Royalist Faithful to “royal majesty” 1 Chronicles 29:25

Note these scriptures.

“And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David’s counsellor, from his city, even from Giloh, while he offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom...And one told David, saying, *Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom.* And David said, O LORD, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness” 2 Samuel 15:12, 31.

“And when king David came to Bahurim, behold, thence came out a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei, the son of Gera: *he came forth, and cursed still as he came. And he cast stones at David, and at all the servants of king David: and all the people and all the mighty men were on his right hand and on his left”* 2 Samuel 16:5-6.

“These be the names of the mighty men whom David had...Eliphelet the son of Ahasbai, the son of the Maachathite, *Eliam the son of Ahithophel the Gilonite*” 2 Samuel 23:8, 34.

Eliam’s own father joined the conspirators under Absalom against **“David the king”** 1 Samuel 21:11, 1 Chronicles 17:16, 24:31, 26:26, 28:2, 29:1, 9, 29, 2 Chronicles 2:12, 7:6, Matthew 1:6 twice. However, Eliam was royally righteous in his faithfulness in following the **“royal majesty”** 1 Chronicles 29:25 of **“David the king”** though against his own father and leaving his beloved daughter tarry-

ing *“by the stuff”* 1 Samuel 30:24 at home. Eliam was then among those on the receiving end of vicious taunts from *“the king’s enemies”* Psalm 45:5. He was like Levi *“Who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children: for they have observed thy word, and kept thy covenant”* Deuteronomy 33:9.

It will be the same for the Christian who seeks to be worthy of the Lord Jesus Christ.

“He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me” Matthew 10:37-38.

“If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you” John 15:19.

“Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” 2 Timothy 3:12.

Eliam Rewarded, and Ascended to “the spirits of just men made perfect” Hebrews 12:23

On earth, Eliam lost his first grandson but God gave him four more, each one no doubt as with Naomi *“a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age”* Ruth 4:15 and two in the line of the Lord Jesus Christ, Solomon, Matthew 1:6 and Nathan, Luke 3:31.

“Now these were the sons of David...born unto him in Jerusalem; Shimea, and Shobab, and Nathan, and Solomon, four, of Bathshua the daughter of Ammiel” 1 Chronicles 3:5.

Moreover, the above evaluation shows that it could be said of Eliam the royalist and father-in-law to the king what Ahimelech said of *“the king’s son in law”* of his time.

“Then Ahimelech answered the king, and said, And who is so faithful among all thy servants as David, which is the king’s son in law, and goeth at thy bidding, and is honourable in thine house?” 1 Samuel 22:14.

Joab was judged by the first part of Proverbs 13:13 but Eliam was no doubt rewarded according to the second part *“but he that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded.”* Eliam’s faithfulness like David’s expressed in 1 Samuel 22:14 no doubt placed him with *“the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect”* Hebrews 12:23 because he would have ascended with the Lord Jesus Christ Who *“When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive”* Ephesians 4:8³.

Paul states of Timothy that he was *“faithful in the Lord”* 1 Corinthians 4:17 and that *“ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel”* Philippians 2:22.

Timothy with Paul was like Eliam with David with respect to faithfulness. That is how it should be for today’s believer with the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations” Luke 22:28.

Noting too the standards set even by *“your adversary the devil”* 1 Peter 5:8, today’s believer should manifest boldness, command of the scripture and dedication to calling as Joab, though a consummate rogue, and in patience in suffering and in fidelity to the king as Eliam, a committed royalist as today’s believer should be with respect to *“the King of kings, and Lord of lords”* 1 Timothy 6:15 as King David exhorts:

The Role of the Book for Today’s Believer

“Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart” Psalm 40:7-8.

References

¹ image.slidesharecdn.com/2samuel23bmoremightymen-131103061544-phpapp02/95/2-samuel-23b-more-mighty-men-2-638.jpg?cb=1383459391

² Ruckman Reference Bible pp 483-484

³ Ruckman Reference Bible p 1557