

2 Samuel 23:8-39

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[0 : 0 0] A list of names with a few impressive exploits thrown in on the front end to keep the reader interested. But even at that, by verse 18, we are entrenched in a straightforward catalog of names.

Interest could wane. Your eyes wander ahead in the verses to see when the list ends. In a public setting such as this morning, about the only thing that keeps a normal bloke paying attention is seeing how often or not the reader might stumble into butchering a pronunciation.

And Brock, who drew the short end of the stick today, did a very good job, didn't he? You are the envy of all now, Brock.

Just a businessman in the community, not even a student at the Oriental Institute. Lists like the one before us are the bits we blow by.

If you hit one in your quiet time, you're in search of better stuff. They are normally the irrelevant oddities, the vestiges of some literary style that was codified in an ancient age.

[1 : 3 6] But when it comes to your own Monday through Friday, you're convinced on the front end that there's minimal fiber here. Yet, the Bible, which presents itself as God-breathed, that is the expiring, expiration word of God, and everywhere useful for teaching, correction, rebuke, training in righteousness, is filled with them.

I took a couple of hours this week on my own, skimming the Bible from the very first page to the very last page on my screened-in porch, hunting for such lists.

I limited myself to what we have here, a simple list of names. I was surprised to see how many could be flushed out into the open. I noticed at least 61 different lists of names in the Old Testament alone, and I'm sure that's not complete.

Another 14 lists in the New. Some of the 75 lists of names in the Bible can be properly classified as genealogies, but the vast majority are simply like the one before us.

A bundling of names around a role or a function played. Lists in the Bible include wall builders and musicians, priests, as well as gatekeepers, court officials, and the one you wanted to be a part of, inheritors of land.

[3 : 2 7] In the New Testament, the lists are fewer in number, but they're more consolidated in type. You have lists, multiple, of the disciples, as well as the names of the women who followed Jesus, and later on, fellow workers, men and women of Paul, and then that famous Hebrews 11 list of renowned individuals known for faith and endurance.

The space devoted to lists of names in the Bible is extraordinary. In fact, by sheer number of verses alone, the lists comprise upwards of 1,600 verses of biblical text.

Let me give you an idea of how much that is. If you lined up all the verses of biblical text on a listing of names, and you decided to read through them in one setting, it would be the equivalent to reading through the verse count of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, and almost all of 1 John.

A vast commitment of God to give us a list of names. And I'm not even including the narrative portions of the Old Testament where you get a travel log of King and his accomplishments by King and his accomplishments, which is a further listing of the activity of those individuals.

Are you intrigued yet about our text this morning? I am. But what is the purpose of this list? In a word, that we might have a record of the leading warriors who assisted King David in battle.

[5 : 44] A record. Here are the men by name who not only sought refuge in the anointed and protection from him, but who warred relentlessly on his behalf.

The editors of 1 and 2 Samuel want the reader to know that as David is preparing to go off the pages of Scripture here, he didn't go it alone.

His work, that is of the anointed, which has been the substance of these books, is one that others participated in and most likely could not have been accomplished without it.

I love knowing that. Even the anointed one of God doesn't stand alone. Behind him, an army in tow, fully devoted followers.

A bit further on in the Bible, if you ever turn up 1 Chronicles, he revisits this list and adds to it and edits it and it's almost as if there's an initial list and then an ever expanding list, a widening circle of soldiers which lets us know that the list we're looking at today in 2 Samuel 23 is given at a particular point in time, on a day, and not intended to be complete.

[7 : 26] The purpose of the list to let you see the record of those who are co-laborers with God's anointed Christ, namely David. Let me say a couple things about how appropriate lists are.

At first glance, they seem unimportant. But it'd be interesting to see what's in your baby box. My mom, and I know we did for our kids, have a box of things that are important papers for our children.

No doubt, their high school graduation program is in there. And it's just a long listing of names. But they're among those who finished.

If you came into my office downtown, you'd only see one thing in over 25 years of ministry now that's up. Only one.

And it's up behind me today. It's a list. It's simply a list titled, A Petition to Organize as a Particular Church, March 29, 1998.

[8 : 42] We, the underside persons, believing God has called us together as a people. Do humbly and joyfully petition the Council of Elders of College Church in Wheaton to be permitted to form a particular church in accordance with the confession and order of our Constitution under the name Holy Trinity Church.

And to do this on the morning of May 3, 1998. We do so desiring to magnify the glory of God and extend His kingdom in utter reliance upon His Word and Spirit.

There are the names. 33 in number. By the time we formed as a church, 37. Oh, if I was able to give the membership list before you today, not only of Hyde Park, but of members downtown and west and north, an ever-widening circle of soldiers, of people who participated.

not in following pastors in the formation of a church. Pastors included on that list together, all of us following the anointed Jesus Christ and making a name for His glory.

The list is significant. Might be the one thing I grab. The wrecking ball comes through that building.

[10 : 01] If the purpose of the list is to have a record, the highlights in the list certainly are meant to engender our respect.

Take a look at the chapter. The narrated acts of valor on the front end are awe-inspiring.

Now, this is the stuff of legends. The lauded accomplishments of the three alone, well, they contain the stuff of bedtime stories for any Israelite child living in a post-exilic world.

All the preacher has to do, like on a morning like this, is to read the exploits. It doesn't need a lot of commentary. Commentary would just detract or take away.

I mean, just feel the weight and power and the respect when you know that Joseph Basibeth cheated on account of wielding his spear against 800 whom he killed at one time.

[11 : 16] Eleazar, who rose and struck down the Philistines until his hand was weary and clung to the sword. Shammah, who took his stand in the midst of the plot of ground filled with lentils and defended it and struck down the Philistines.

The three who risked all behind enemy lines so that their king might enjoy some hometown water, only to find their kindness returned by an elevated action of the king who esteemed them and their lives as more worthy to him than all the comforts of home.

Abishai, who wielded his spear against 300 men and killed them. And Benaiah, who struck down two vaunted aerials of Moab, a lion in a pit and an Egyptian giant by turning his own implement of war against him.

Acts of valor were all the stuff of Hollywood, only real. When the chronicler takes his swing at the list, he kind of fills it.

And the legacy and the life-giving characteristics of this entire list only engender greater respect. Oh, to have known any one of these would have been an answer to a question we hear today, who are some of the most powerful people you've ever met?

[12 : 55] The chronicler indicates that they began coming to David at Ziklag at a time when he was outnumbered and he was on the run from Saul.

Saul. In other words, they were early adopters of an anointed king that from outward circumstances had no possible means of actually bringing his work to fruition.

The chronicler is careful to indicate that they all came to David out of a belief that the Lord had set him up as successor. This is repeated when you read the scriptures.

They came to him in response to a conviction that the Lord had anointed him to be the shepherd over his people.

He writes that some of them were ambidextrous. That is, he says they could sling the stone or shoot the arrow with the left hand or the right hand.

[14 : 02] As a former college basketball player, I love that. These guys could go left and right and you didn't know which hand they were. We're told that these men were experts with the shield and the spear.

Get this, that they had faces like that of lions. I know the beard is coming back in now. It's in vogue. People have asked me, when am I going to try to grow one?

Well, in theory, I probably could grow one. But these are the bearded, lion-looking like men. The chronicler says they had feet like those of a gazelle upon the mountain.

Just able to move in and out. Not like Pastor Jay trying to come up and down off this thing. the least, get this, this is what the chronicler says, the least in this list at a final war was a match for a hundred men and the greatest for a thousand.

We're told that they were equipped, seasoned, and arrayed. That they came with a singleness of purpose.

[15 : 33] And then this phrase, that their whole heart was given over to making David king. not only that, but that they were eating and drinking with him around the table, assisted by relatives and extended families, where there was joy in Israel.

I mean, this is a band of brothers, if ever there was one. Better than Arthur and Sir Dwayne for all the knights of the round table.

Real men, men among men, and now remembered and respected through the ages. What do we do with that?

Well, first I want to say the men. Not because I'm sexist, but because of the list. The work of the Lord is stronger when men are engaged.

increasingly, a smaller and smaller percentage of individuals in North America are going to church, and among the percentage of individuals who go to church, increasingly a stronger percentage of women outnumbers the men, depending upon the statistics you look at.

[17 : 02] Of those who go, the average church has an attendance of about 65% women, 35% men. Not so here, but around the country.

And I'd like to say something to the men. Learn how to take care of yourself. And then learn how to take care of those around you, nearest to you.

children. And then learn how to shoulder the weight of the family of God. And then learn how to make a difference in the community in which you live.

There's much that can be done if the men in the church were engaged to develop the characteristics we read about here.

think of those phrases. A single heart toward making David king. Or this phrase, they were whole heartedly devoted to putting him in as king.

[18 : 13] Now think if you're a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. Wholehearted devotion to the elevation of his name in this place.

All in. No, no one who's not involved. And imagine one with the strength of a hundred.

And another with the strength of a thousand. I think of the New Testament and how it alters our perception, lest you think that being a man is all about testosterone and sword wielding, blood leading, killing.

I was thinking of Peter this week in the garden getting ready to put himself on this kind of list. Had his sword out with a full belief that his Lord was anointed and struck off the ear of Malchus doing the man thing said, Peter.

And Jesus said, no, no, no, no, Peter. I'm glad you read 2 Samuel 23. And I'm going to make sure that a couple of these guys put your name on the list of disciples.

[19 : 44] But this is not the way God's plan at this time in history moves forward. So Malchus, get over here. Somebody hand me that. No need to go to the Mayo Clinic.

Let's get this right. Sheath your sword. Lay down your life. Or I'm laying down mine. Think of Jesus, you know, the irony in the way in which he brings about his kingdom.

Marching under this self-sacrificial giving of his life that the wrath of God would be turned away and raising up an army of men and women who lay down their life to make a difference in the kingdom.

I think of the weapons and the weapons of those in Ephesians 6 that Paul writes, be strengthened in the strength of the Lord Jesus Christ and put on the armor of God and all the weaponry of life coming down to righteousness, faith, a devotion to his word, prayer, a persistence in living well under the rule of Christ, under and in self-control.

All of those wonderful things. I'd say this to the men of Holy Trinity. Maybe you don't feel like you've been equipped or seasoned or arrayed.

[21 : 27] Well, beginning later this fall, I'm going to start gathering the men together, maybe somewhere between six and ten times a year, and we're going to sit down on this stuff.

what does it mean to take care of yourself? What does it mean to be able to take care of those next to you or closest to you? How do you begin to take leadership and take care of the church and our neighborhood?

Who wants your name on that list? The church moves forward with it. Christ has done it all, but then he enlists lawyers, and not only men, but women.

Over the 15 years as a pastor here, I share the perspective of the chronicler who's able to write about how a list that small is expanded in scope and in strength of hundreds who, over the years, have come in and out and have done all that they can to secure a place for the reign of Christ in this church and in this neighborhood.

And the list goes way beyond gender. In fact, the New Testament gives a feel to this. In the New Testament, you have a genealogy of Jesus listed a few times, but three times you'll have a list of just the 12 disciples.

[23 : 00] But then interestingly, there's also a list of the women who followed Jesus, us, and then by the time of Paul, say for instance at the back end of Romans, chapter 16, a full list of what he calls fellow workers in the gospel.

It's this enlarged understanding of everyone who's following Christ doing what they can to make his name great and further the mission forward.

it's so wonderful to see fellow workers. And who can forget the list in Hebrews 11, the cloud of witnesses, advocates of endurance, all there.

Yes, the list is a record, but the list engenders respect. The emphasis revealed to it brings us a final thing. while their names are on a record, and they have our respect, this list is also meant to teach us reverence for the Lord.

Take a look at the undertones. You'll see it in verse 10 and 12 primarily. Verse 10, the back half, and the Lord brought about a great victory that day.

[24 : 22] See how subtly it was just placed in there? Our minds were filled with the action of the individual and the narrator writes, and the Lord brought about a great victory that day.

Same thing in verse 12. After this great majestic stand in the midst of the field of lentils and the Lord worked a great victory.

Don't miss it. It's the Lord who stood behind their accomplishments. He is active in the affairs of men. The Lord is the agent who works in and through them to accomplish His will.

You cannot read the Bible without coming away with this kind of belief. That God, first of all, there is a God, but not only that, but God is actually engaged in the affairs of human history, especially His own people.

and that God is the one who animates the efforts of His people. He actually is the one who breathes light into your work.

[25 : 34] And that without Him we can do nothing. That it's the Lord who does all the notorious acts that take everything you have laid out with the strain and drain of local church life, exhausted, depleted, spent, your energy, but Christ's energy working in you.

It's the Lord who does it all. I can't wait until I get to rest from my labor.

But until that day, I will labor for my rest. And may that be true of all of us. God, by His Spirit, empowers our ability to increase the name of Jesus in the place in which we live.

Two final things by application. For a believer, then, someone who's trusting in Jesus, this kind of underpinnings that this teaches you reverence for the Lord and His power means that you're steering clear from the furthest thing of moralism.

The last thing I'd like a Christian to think I'm saying today is go out and get it done. Pull yourself up by your bootstraps and conquer the world for Christ.

[27 : 15] Or emulate them in a way that they become nothing more than a moral lesson for you. No. This is the work that's done by the power of the Spirit and requires Him to be animating all that we do.

If you're coming along here to Sundays and not yet convinced that Jesus is the one you're going to follow, I've got some application for you, not just merely that the Christian would rest in the strength of God to enliven your work and your commitments, but that you would repent, that you would make the anointed king, that you would seek refuge under His lordship.

The New Testament actually presents a message that God in Jesus has put a judge in the world and under Him we are to give our lives.

If you haven't done that, He's a victorious warrior on His way and every knee will bow, even yours, one day.

give yourself to Him. Surrender your life to Him. This is what it will require you to follow Him.

[28 : 45] So ironic, isn't it, how God accomplished this? His own Son, the shedding of His own blood at the hands of those who took His life out.

And as His blood goes into the ground, I actually think of this kind of soft allusion to David pouring out the water in the ground, knowing that their blood was more precious.

And I think of Jesus and His blood pouring into the ground that we might partake of His cup and His life. Have you done that?

Have you surrendered to the King who wore a crown? that crucifixion? And one last thing.

There is a list you don't want to be left off of. You might not be on that list. Some of you are actually. I'll leave it back there. You can look at it later. But more important than being on a list or as the text said two or three times, He made a name for Himself.

[29 : 55] more important is the song we sang today, that He knows my name, that I'm on a list that He wrote.

Daniel 12 refers to it in the sense of the book of life. Luke refers to it in chapter 10, verse 20, when the disciples got wind of what was going on in their work.

demons were submitting to them. They thought, wow, man, we're making a name for ourselves. You should see what's going on out there. And Jesus says, hey, guys, sit down, circle up.

Let me tell you something. Don't start getting all up about what you're getting done out there in the city. Rejoice that your names are in the book of life.

what He's saying is there's something much more important even in what you accomplish. Are you one that the Lord knows by name?

[31 : 04] Is your name etched, etched, signed in the blood of Christ, in life? For there will be a day when we stand there, and that's open.

I think of, I don't know how to put this to you in raw terms other than to give you a minimalist like Johnny Cash. There's a man going around taking names, and he decides who to free and who to blame.

Everybody won't be treated all the same. There'll be a golden ladder reaching down, when the man comes around.

The hairs on your arm will stand up, and the tear in each sip and in each suck. Will you partake of that last offered cup, or disappear into the powder's ground when the man comes around?

hear the trumpets, hear the pipers, 100 million angels singing, multitudes are marching, I can just hear the piano, dong, dong, dong, to the big kettle drum.

[32 : 34] Voices calling, voices crying, some are born, some are dying. It's Alpha and Omega's kingdom come.

He's coming. There's a list. Get on it. By going to Jesus for refuge and protection and a complete reorientation of your commitment.

So that when you rise in the morning, His name is on your lips and His deeds are in your life. The most embarrassing moment of my life happened a couple years ago.

I mean, the most embarrassing moment. Bar none. I'd have been invited to a big event. I mean, this was big.

Lisa and I, people from all over the country, a select group, were invited. We were astounded that we had been invited. And I called in, we're coming.

[33 : 54] And we showed up on the day of and walked to the table. And literally, literally, next to us, people of like national, international over now.

And I was kind of like the chronicler at that moment. I was filling up. I gave my name. We don't have you on the list.

Well, I recall that I know we're on the list. No, we're not on the list. You can't come in. We watched people go in. And we turned around and walked out.

The most embarrassing moment of my life. And I had a sense on what it's going to look like when the man comes.

The presumption that my name was on the list. But it wasn't. the embarrassment of everlasting disunion with God for failing to submit your life to Christ.

[35 : 10] I'm trying to save you that embarrassment today. I know getting saved is often about staying away from the wrath of God.

And it is. And giving your life to Christ is about overcoming all your sin and fallenness. And it is. Hey! Don't be embarrassed!

And sit somewhere else outside the great bank your home. I hope you never skip over the list of names in the Bible again.

They provide a record of co-laborers. men and women who should engender our respect.

And they give us a reverence for God that is exemplified in resting in his power to be at work and in repenting that we might be numbered among him.

[36 : 19] our heavenly father we thank you for this reading today and ask that our lives would be carefully orchestrated to serve your purposes and ends in Jesus name amen