

# Dare To Be A Benaiah

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] well I don't know if you were here last week or not but if you were you will have heard may speak a little on the subject of suffering from Romans chapter 8 verse 37 and we look there at how the Christian is victorious within the realm of suffering and during that sermon I exhorted each of us to embrace suffering and not to see suffering as something which is strange something alien to the Christian experience but I think there is a danger when we speak about such things when we put emphases like this upon the congregation now my hope was that those who heard the sermon would be freed somewhat freed in the will of God freed knowing that we have a benevolent and loving creator sustainer and redeemer who ordains everything we experience for our good that nothing catches them by surprise and so we don't need to be scared of what may come but some of us might not have heard that emphasis and others may have been thinking to themselves dearie me the Christian life is just going to be one series of blows after another you know it's it's kind of like the the Calvinist the joke about the Calvinist who falls down the stairs and he says praise the lord that's over they're expecting bad things they expect God to ordain painful things and they live in fear as a result so as I can account counterbalance maybe to the emphasis of last week I thought it would be maybe wise to focus on a topic that would encourage us would inspire us that would help us remember that though we suffer though we continue to experience victory and that we will always be united to Christ

I hoped to bring out this evening that the Christian life still involves great deeds being accomplished through the most ordinary Christians Daniel chapter 11 verse 32 says this in the authorized translation the people that do know their God shall be strong and do exploits the people that do know their God shall be strong and do exploits now you may suffer you may find life difficult but the Lord through his word has promised that even the most ordinary saint the most insignificant believer he can do great things through that person and for his own glory so if nothing else what I hope to accomplish this evening through the preaching of the word is to stir your faith as William Carey said and I mentioned it last week

I think attempt great things for God and expect great things from God if we're going to make a mistake in the Christian life let's not make it the mistake of believing God for too little let's not make it that mistake and so to that end then I want to speak a little bit this evening on Benaiah the son of Jehoiada now I don't know if you've ever heard a sermon on Benaiah the son of Jehoiada he's a fascinating character and one who I would argue serves as an inspiration to us for lives of courageous discipleship but you know not all would be pleased with me using Benaiah the son of Jehoiada as a template for Christian discipleship those who wouldn't be pleased would be those who would maybe adopt a sneering disposition towards hymns like children's choruses such as Dare to be a Daniel who's ever heard the Dare to be a Daniel song the little ditty do you remember how it goes it goes I'm not going to sing it don't worry but it says Dare to be a Daniel Dare to stand alone Dare to have a purpose firm Dare to make it known now the purpose of that little children's chorus is to help those who sing it to draw courage and inspiration and strength from the example of Daniel and to imitate his faith now you remember what Daniel did he was in the land of the Chaldeans he was schooled in all the language and the literature but yet when he was given the king's food he said right I've learned all your literature I've learned all your education but that's far enough I'm not going to eat the king's food he made a courageous stand he stood out from the crowd and also when quiet times were made illegal in the land

Daniel decided that he'd rather die than give up praying three times a day I don't know about you but I would give up a quiet time once a day if it meant I could watch Netflix sometimes but Daniel would rather die than give up his three times a day with the Lord but as I've said you know there are some biblical scholars and preachers particularly from within our own tradition who argue that we

shouldn't use Daniel as an example we shouldn't use Benaiah son of Jehoiada as a template for courage but rather we should look at Benaiah and we should look at Daniel as typological figures now that's a kind of mouthful but what I mean by that is this we should see Daniel and we should see Benaiah as pointing forward to Christ and they would argue these theologians and these preachers that if we use

[ 6 : 36 ] Daniel as a moral template as an inspiration for discipleship then we run the risk of eclipsing Christ himself and we make the scripture the Old Testament narrative just a series of moral lessons and so the Bible is I suppose co-opted from its testimony to Christ and it's made a moralistic manual now I'm very sympathetic with preachers who are worried about us drawing moral lessons from the Old Testament but I would ask the question why is being Christ centred and having a moral application why are these two things mutually exclusive you see very often we are inflexible in our thinking we think if the Old Testament is all about Christ then it can't be about me at all and the Bible is more nuanced than that it's more carefully written than that you see throughout the history of the church you know errors that have come to the church have come because of over emphasis a lot of the time our own doctrinal standards you know the Westminster

Confession of Faith that was written in the context of antinomianism at the time now antinomian is just a fancy word for those who believe that grace was everything in the Christian life there were certain preachers in 17th century England who would say Jesus plus nothing is everything have you ever heard of something like that Jesus plus nothing equals everything sounds very pious sounds very holy and they would say that Christ's work of justification is so powerful that the whole of the Christian life is about realising how self righteous we tend to become and how gracious Christ is and understanding the grace of God in Christ now that sounds very pious it sounds almost right but you know the problem was these guys totally neglected to speak on the life of sanctification they didn't speak about the need for the law to come in and teach us how we should live and so they downplayed and ignored a life of holiness it was almost a let go and let

God the more you understand how powerless you are the more you'll understand how gracious God is and you'll trust in his grace and you know you can be too Christ centred because there's a place in scripture for battling for beating the flesh for beating the body lest after having preached to others we ourselves should be cast off Jesus said the life of holiness is essential that without holiness no one will see the Lord if in the realm therefore of salvation we can be too Jesus centred I would argue that we can be too Jesus centred in the way we read the Old Testament if our reading of the Old Testament means that Christ becomes so prominent that we become completely excluded then we become I would argue interpretive antinomians but let's read through Hebrews 11 just take a passage from Hebrews 11 and the whole of Hebrews 11 I would argue is a kind of dare to be a Daniel dare to be a Benaiah type hermeneutic it says this therefore in Hebrews 11 verse 24 by faith Moses when he was grown up refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin he considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt for he was looking to the reward by faith he left Egypt not being afraid of the anger of the king for he endured us seeing him who is invisible the Old Testament saints yes they point to Jesus Christ but they don't just to emulate they teach us by their successes and by their failures how to navigate lives and grow in sanctification and in faith and in hope and in love as the apostle Paul says in Romans chapter 15 and verse 4 whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction that through endurance and through the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope so it may have sounded almost like an unnecessary academic kind of excursus that I just went on there but it's an important one because there's many within the church today who don't feel we have license to read the Old Testament in order to inspire us to motivate us to encourage us and so with that said let's look at Benaiah the son of Jehoiada as we should dare to be a Daniel I would argue that we must dare to be a Benaiah well who was he Benaiah son of Jehoiada he was a foot soldier for King David now in the passage we read this evening we read about David speaking at the end of his life and about how

[ 12 : 23 ] God had made him king and helped him consolidate power if you look at verse 5 of chapter 23 David says this for does not my house stand so with God for he has made with me an everlasting covenant ordered in all things and secure for will he not cause to prosper all my help and my desire so David is basically saying God made me strong God established my kingdom and made me the powerful man that I became and one of the means through which David's kingdom

was established was warfare we read about David's exploits in war throughout the books of 1st and 2nd Samuel and David speaks about this warfare in verses 6 and 7 of chapter 23 and he speaks about his enemies describing them as worthless men like thorns that are thrown away for they cannot be taken with the hand but the man who touches them arms himself with iron and the shaft of a spear and they are utterly consumed with fire he's saying my enemies they're like thorns and you don't go to thorns where a pair of marigolds are on you take a weapon and you hack them to pieces and by the power of

God with the help of God that's what I did and after speaking about the consolidation of his power verses 8 through to 39 gives the lists of David's generals and captains and soldiers the mighty men who helped David accomplish dominion and rule in his part of the Middle East the men of 2 Samuel 23 are the men through whom God consolidated the power of the Davidic king and throughout the chapter you read of heroic deeds incredible deeds one man against five against ten against hundreds and one such man was Benaiah the son of Jehoiada he was one of the foot soldiers used to consolidate the reign of the king David and I would argue therefore that the application to us is pretty straightforward you see as the Lord used

Benaiah the son of Jehoiada to consolidate the rule of king David so the Lord uses his people today to consolidate the rule of king David's greater son we can all learn from the example of Benaiah son of Jehoiada in the establishment and the spreading of Christ's kingdom and the increase of his dominion so I want us to notice three brief things about Benaiah and his service to his Davidic king he did something that was terrifying the scary thing he did something which was difficult the hard thing but he did something which was amazing the incredible thing and we'll look at each briefly in turn firstly then the scary thing look at where his service to the king leads him in verse 20 it says that he struck down a lion now it's not that he just kind of randomly encountered a lion when he was out buying a pint of milk he didn't just pop out and was confronted with this ravenous beast rather he hunted the lion down now lions today are extinct in the

Middle East but back in the ancient Near East as we call it lions while not being all over the place they had a significant presence in the countryside and back then lion hunting was a test of valour and strength for soldiers kings for instance saw those who hunted lions as manly men can you imagine today if you killed a lion and put a picture of it on social media you don't get much kudos for it you get lots of vitriol and abuse but back then if you were to stand on twitter with a lion's head and say look what I did you'd be getting lots and lots of likes and retweets people would be impressed at your strength and your courage so there was a technique involved in hunting a lion what the lion hunter would do is he would dig a pit and then he would chase the lion he would try to frighten the animal and he would manage to chase it towards the pit and the lion would fall into it and then the man would go down into the pit and finish it off and so here we have Benaiah he's proving himself to the king he's saying

I'm going to hunt down the lion but it wasn't just lions that he fought it was lion like men we read of the two moabites it's a very kind of strange word here in verse 20 it says Benaiah son of Jehoiada was a valiant man of Kabzib a doer of great deeds he struck down two ariels of moab now the word ariels there probably refers to warrior but in structure the word ariel is very similar in the Hebrew to the word for lion so the author is telling us here that Benaiah son of Jehoiada struck down physical lions and any took on lion like men fierce men terrifying men and here is where Benaiah can encourage us you see often the will of God for us in the service of our king will involve us coming into situations which are terrifying which cause us to tremble which make us fear to an almost visceral level and I think that's why there are so many texts in scripture that encourages not to be afraid does anybody know how many verses there are in scripture commanding us not to be scared there's 365 of them last time I looked that's one for every day and it's almost as if the Lord is saying every day you need to hear a fresh and a new don't be afraid don't be scared imagine

[ 18 : 56 ] Joshua I think Joshua in the Old Testament was a terrifying kind of character he seemed to have no weaknesses but the Lord look at what the Lord called him to do he said take this bunch of slaves who have never fought in any wars they are a bit wet behind the ears and go into that nation of giants that superpower that wicked and fierce country of Canaan and wipe them out I want you to fight them with this bunch of children no wonder the Lord had to say be very courageous Joshua don't be scared Joshua I'm scared going into Golan with my whole family each Sunday never mind going into the land of Canaan with a bunch of kids ready for a fight and I think Benaiah must have been scared facing down the lion facing down the two Moabite soldiers but the notable

thing here is that while fear must have been inevitable

Benaiah son of Jehoiada was not controlled by fear in a fearful situation he felt the fear and did it anyway as the book title goes and so I would ask you maybe the Lord is calling you to some fearful situation this evening and you might not be facing a physical lion or a warrior so to speak but in many ways what we experience and face is far worse than physical lions far worse than soldiers with knives and swords scripture tells us in Ephesians 6 verse 12 we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against powers against the principalities against the spiritual rulers over this present darkness and they have a figurehead 1st Peter 5 8 tells us he is like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour rather we will war we are in a fight if you belong to man

There's a war raging round about us in the unseen regions. And that we have armies and hosts of unseen spiritual entities arrayed against us.

These forces intent on destroying our relationship with Christ. Intent on smearing the purity of his bride.

And intent on bringing reproach upon the church. Now there is a danger I think of seeing the devil under every nook and cranny. And saying oh the devil did this and the devil did that.

[ 22 : 00 ] But I don't think that's our problem as Presbyterians. I don't think we struggle with our super supernaturalism. I think our tendency is the other way. We lurch through life.

We sleepwalk through the war. It's kind of like a man arriving on the Normandy beach. During the Normandy landings. And there's bullets flying about him.

There's gunshots going on. There's people dying round about him. But he's arrived on the beach with his deck chair. And with a novel. And with Bermuda shorts. And he's sitting down in the war. Unaware and oblivious. Of the war that's raging on. Now it's an absurd picture isn't it? A little man walking through the beach. With his you know ice cream.

And there's death and destruction going on round about him. And war raging. And malevolent evil. Opposing him. But how do you think the Lord sees us?

[ 23 : 02 ] How do you think the hosts of the Lord look upon us? Do they see us as warriors? Advancing the kingdom of David's greater son.

Or do they see us as the naive man on the deck chair? Entertaining himself to death. While death and destruction rages all around him.

So it is appropriate to ask ourselves. Now and again. You know. These thoughts that I keep getting. These self-loathing thoughts.

These thoughts which continually assail me. And make me think I'd rather be dead than alive.

Could that be the devil speaking to me? Could that be a dark power tormenting me?

Or what about that pull some of us men have towards watching illicit material? Whether on television or online. Have you ever thought that maybe someone baited that hook?

[ 24 : 05 ] That there's somebody on the other end of it? Or maybe. Maybe there's the voice telling us to get very zealous for religious things.

And so that we must give up all various forms of enjoyment in order to be a true Christian. You know often. Satan's temptations can involve making us zealous.

For forms of religion and holiness that are completely warped. We need to be attuned. We need to be aware of the spiritual battle going on around us.

We need to know the greatness of our enemy. And we need to resist them. But I would say and I would argue from the passage this evening. We need to move beyond mere resistance.

And move towards hunting. You see Benaiah didn't go out thinking I better get myself ready in case I meet a lion. Benaiah went out and thought I'm going to find a lion.

[ 25 : 05 ] I'm going to trap a lion. And I'm going to slay a lion. And pray that God would put you into situations. Scary situations.

Where you can bring about a great work for him. You see the Lord might be asking you tonight. I want you to witness to that person at work.

Who has greater gifts than you. Who is more intelligent than you. Who knows your position better than you do. And who's able to make you look like a fool. I want you to speak to that person about Jesus.

I don't want you to be afraid of that person. Feel the fear. And do it anyway. Anyway. The apostle Paul said. I came to you with weakness and with fear and with much trembling.

But he came. He came. The fear didn't stop him. He didn't say to himself. I'm too scared to go to Corinth. He went to Corinth. And so don't let fear control you.

[ 26 : 06 ] Don't let it dictate to you. Because often it can lead to the stagnant life. You know I think about. The story of lions.

We're on to lions this evening. And there's a story of lions. That when the older lion. The male lion. He gets too either old or too fat to run.

But like myself. He has to sit down. And not get involved in the hunting. But what he does do is. He helps the younger lions. By creating a diversion.

So he roars at the wildebeest. He lies there all old and fat. Roring at the wildebeest. And the wildebeest get terrified. By the sound of the roar.

They hear it coming from that direction. So they turn on their hoofs. And run in that direction. And what they do is. They run into an ambush of young. Fit. Powerful lions.

[ 27 : 04 ] Who tear them to shreds. Now the moral there is. Had the wildebeest run towards that. Which caused them the greatest fear. They would have been safe. And often that thing.

That thing which echoes. With deep fear in your heart. That is the thing. That the Lord wants you to run towards. That will be the area.

And the arena. Where the Lord is going to bless you. So don't run. From the scary thing. Run towards the roar. Run towards the difficult thing. And the Lord.

Will bring you into the sphere. Of something terrifying. And it will be difficult as well. To add insult. To injury. And that's the second point. I want to make. You see. Often when the Lord.

Brings us into certain situations. He doesn't just. Seem to be content. With causing us to fear. In the situation. It's almost as if. The Lord delights.

[ 28 : 01 ] In making it impossible. In adding layers of difficulty. If you look at the situation. That Benaiah got himself into. The pit. That he had to go down into.

That was already going to be difficult. You know. It would have been small. It would have been enclosed. But we're told. That the snow had fallen. And he had to go down into the pit. On the day the snow had fallen.

So the conditions. Would have been difficult. They would have been slippy. He could have ended up. Falling on. His backside. And ended up as. You know. Dinner. For this. Rather angry cat.

And so. You know. This is a kind of rare situation. Snow didn't often fall. In the Middle East. But look at the situation. With the Ariels. Of the Moabites.

It was two on one. So it wasn't just. He was fighting a fierce guy. He had to fight two of them. At the same time. And you know. Sometimes.

[ 28 : 59 ] The situation. Is not only difficult. But we're woefully ill equipped. For what. Is in front of us. Look at the situation. With the Egyptian. Verse 21. The Egyptian.

Had a spear in his hand. But Benaiah. Went down to him. With a staff. So the Egyptian. Standing there. Looking all terrifying. With a spear. And he's just got a wee stick.

He's ill equipped. He's not ready. For the fight. In front of him. He had no weapon. And that can be like us. You know. We suddenly find ourselves. In the terrifying situation.

And we feel unprepared. We feel that we're ill equipped. We don't have the knowledge required. We don't feel that we've been. Spending long hours. With the Lord. In prayer. We feel out of sync.

Everything feels wrong. And we feel a certain sense. Of dismay. That we have been. Plunged into this situation. But that's what service to the king looks like.

[ 29 : 57 ] It involves. Coming to situations. Feeling dry. Feeling out of it. Feeling out of sorts. Feeling ill equipped. Terrified.

That's who the Lord works. That's what he has ordained. And this is his delight. He loves walking through. Ill equipped.

And weak people. Spiritually dry. People. You know. Sometimes. I think it's. Very tempting. To be downcast.

And almost despairing. Of the relative weakness. Of our church. Compared to the world. You know. Think about our own. Denomination. You know.

For all our. Growth. And you know. The excitement. Maybe. That sometimes. Goes on about church planting. And. In our general assembly. We're still pretty small.

[ 30 : 53 ] And you know. We can. Get a little bit. I suppose. Disheartened by this. But you know. This is God's design. He loves using weakness. He loves.

Using the things. That are not. To shame. The things. That are. God. When. He chose. The Corinthian church. Paul says to them. God chose.

What is foolish. In the world. To shame the wise. God chose. What is weak. In the world. To shame the strong. He chose. What is low. And despised. In the world. Even things. That are not. To bring. To nothing.

The things. That are. So that no human being. Might boast. In the presence. Of God. Your weakness. Your being. Caught off guard.

Your. Fear. That was ordained. By the Lord. To bring him glory. You remember. Gideon. You know. The Lord says to him.

[ 31 : 47 ] You're going to fight. The Midianites. Get rid of. Most of these men. You've got too many. You've got too many. He says. I want you to use. The 300. That lapped.

Like dogs. I'm going to get. The victory. Through them. These guys. Who are. Just. Absolutely. Absurd. And the same. As with the church. The Lord. Has chosen. Those who are. Absurd. Those who are. The outsiders. To nullify. Those who are. Not many. Politicians. In here. This evening. Or male models. Or celebrities.

We look around. It's a pretty. You know. I run the risk. Of being insulting. So I won't say anything. But you've got. You know. You've got a fat bald preacher. Standing before you.

This evening. You know. A guy who didn't do very well. At school. A guy who had an okay job. And he's preaching. Telling you. About God's wisdom.

[ 32 : 42 ] And it would look absurd. To those. On the outside. But that is how God. Has ordered. And ordained it. Now. I've run out of time. And so.

I am going to. Just. Very briefly. Speak. On the last point. And I will just say this. Benaiah did. The scary thing. And he did.

The difficult thing. And through that experience. The Lord did. An incredible thing. He tore the lion. To pieces. He killed the Moabites.

And he stabbed the Egyptian. With his own sword. And you know. That is God's way. Of reversing fortunes. Of bringing victory.

Out of weakness. And you know. You could say that Benaiah. As he. Conquered. If you like.

[ 33 : 37 ] He was doing. What he saw. In the example. Of his king. You see. You'd seen his king. Slaying. Goliath. With. Two little stones.

Or one little stone rather. And a sling. He saw him. As a shepherd. Coming against. The lion. And the bear. And rescuing. Lambs. From their mouths. And he'd taken courage.

From. His king. The work. Of his king. The apparent weakness. Of his king. And bringing about. Great victories. Had inspired. Benaiah. To go. And do likewise.

Well you know. We have a king. Who is greater. Than king David. We have one. Who did. The terrifying thing. Who was so scared.

That his sweat. Became like drops of blood. On the ground. Who. Paid. For the sins. Of all the people of God. Down. The centuries. He did the hard thing.

[ 34 : 34 ] But he did the victorious. Thing. He did the incredible thing. God raised him from the dead. And seated him in the highest place. And gave him. Divested upon him. All power in heaven and on earth.

And through apparent weakness. And in the midst of fear. The Lord raised him up. And made him. A victor. And he will do the same for us.

If we suffer. If we do. The difficult thing. And the terrifying thing. The Lord. Will do. The incredible thing. You know the Lord.

Jesus said. In. His gospel. Or according to Matthew. In chapter 16. And in verse 18. He said. The gates of hell. Will not prevail. Against my kingdom. Often we think of ourselves. As being under attack. Often we. Say.

[ 35 : 30 ] Oh I'm being attacked by the devil. I'm being oppressed. And harried. By the evil one. But the norm in scripture. Is that we attack him. That we. Go after him.

Gates. Don't attack anyone. You attack. The gates. The city's gates. You expect. Victory. When you attack. A city's gates.

It should be the devil. That's complaining. About you. Not the other way around. So I would encourage you. This evening. Follow in the footsteps.

Of Christ. Don't. Despise. Your weakness. See your weakness. As God's validation. Of you. Of God's. Conscripted. Of you. In his service.

And that in spite. Of your weaknesses. God will use you. In ways you could never. Have possibly imagined. He will answer your prayers. Paul. Prayed. For the Ephesians.

[ 36 : 25 ] And I prayed at the start. That the eyes of our hearts. Would be enlightened. That we would know. The greatness. Of his power. Towards us. Who believe. Make that your prayer.

For yourself. Be like Benaiah. Dare to be Benaiah. Be one. Who is strong. And does exploits. As Daniel 11.

32 says. Expect. Victory. And the Lord. Will do great. Things. We will close. Our. Service.

This evening. In the words of. Psalm 18. This time from the Scottish Psalter. Psalm 18. From the Scottish Psalter. And we are going to sing. Verses. 31 to 36.

That's four stanzas. 31 to 36. Who but the Lord is God. But he who is a rock and stay. Tis God that girdeth me with strength. And perfect makes my way.

[ 37 : 22 ] He made my feet. Swift as the hinds. Set me on my high places. Mine hands to war he taught. Mine arms. Break bows of steel. In pieces. Be strong.

In the Lord. And in the power. Of his might. Psalm 18. Verses 31 to 36. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.