

The Last Stand

Unsung Heroes series

by Bill Aumack

Now we've been talking about Unsung Heroes here in this series. And you know, I don't know if you realize how many heroes that you have in your life. Okay, just stop think about it a minute. There's Batman. Spider Man. Who else? Superman, the Flash, the Hulk, Captain America. Iron Man. Spider Man, Wonder Woman. Right. And we could go on and on and on. Right, the Avengers, X Men, the list is long. I mean, right now in theaters. There's a superhero movie. What's it about? Who's it about? The Blue Beetle? Right? It seems like there's always some superhero movie out there. And it's not just superheroes in our movies, right? Maybe it's our sports stars. Right? Jordan, Magic, Bird, Kobe, Messi, Gretzky. You know, if you took away the number of goals that Gretzky scored, and just counted his assists, he'd still be the number one scorer in hockey. Truly the great one. Hank Aaron, Babe Ruth. Right. We have lots of heroes, we can go on and on. And we have entertainers are actors, actresses, musicians, we got a whole Walk of Fame in Hollywood full of their names. We're a few weeks out from September 11. And remember our first responders that gave so unselfishly of their lives that day to help others. We call our first responders, our police and our firemen, heroes. And of course, there's so many stories coming out of our military. Just so many great stories about the men who did great things and saved their unit or their platoon they were in or did some amazing thing.

You guys probably remember the movie from 2016 Hacksaw Ridge, right. Desmond Das, who like many young men after the Japanese burl to bombed Pearl Harbor, joined the military wanted to do something to help his country. But he was a Seventh-day Adventist Christian and he didn't want to kill people. He wanted to be a medic, and the military doesn't deal well with you coming in and telling them what you want to do, that are kind of a top down organization. And so he got bullied and harassed. Until one day, after being wounded by shrapnel and shot through the arm by a sniper, he saved 75 men. My favorite line of that movie is afterwards when he's talking to his commander, and his commander says,

"I have to apologize. I didn't recognize you." I didn't see the greatness that was in you. I didn't know that you had that in you.

And the truth be told, many of us would like to be a hero. I don't know about you ladies. But as guys, we, you know, we want to be heroes. We'd like to think of ourselves as being the person that when you know, it gets tough, we'll stand up we'll make the difference will be the person that does that will be the hero. And we'd like to do that. And the question is, do we have that stuff in us? And I hope that ultimately we desire to be a hero for God. And so what do we have to do to do that? Do we have to get bit by a radioactive spider or exposed to gamma rays or whatever? turned all these people into heroes? I don't think so. Now the Bible talks a lot about how we're supposed to do that. And we didn't begin to cover it all.

Today we are going to talk about some stories. I want you to open your Bibles to Second Samuel chapter 23. We're just going to hang out there for a little bit. But while you're turning there, I want to a little bit of a backstory some years ago, and this is probably 20 or 30 years ago, now this is going back a little bit. They did a study and they talked to 2000 American eighth grade students, and asked them who did they admire in their lives who might they want to grow up to emulate and be like? And so they gave him a bunch of names. And they gave them names like, and this is going to tell you how old this is. Burt Reynolds, Richard Pryor, Steve Martin, and John Belushi. And when they commented on that, the columnist Sidney J. Harris, lamented that every one of the 30 names that they gathered from those 2000 students was either an entertainer or an athlete. And they were people who had made it big, but had not necessarily done big things. There were no statesmen. There were no astronauts, there were no authors. There were no scientists on the list.

And so that does raise the question, what does it take to be a mighty man or woman for God? How should we act? And so we're going to be looking at some here. We got to do a little backstory before we talk about this and Pastor last week gave us the perfect lead in for this so I hope you caught last week's message. Back in Samuel 1, remember Saul is king. Okay? And God kind of departs from Saul says no more. I'm gonna pick a new king. He sends Samuel down to the house of Jesse. And they he goes through all the sons that are tall, dark and handsome. And God

says, No, that's not the one. And finally they go get the youngest one who's a shepherd out in the fields. Shepherd was the most despised job in all of Israel. It was the lowest of the low. And God said, Yep, that's the one. So Samuel anoints David to be king. And then later Saul is having an issue sleeping and the unnamed servant to Saul suggest David to come in and play music for Saul. He doesn't know David's been already anointed to be king. And David starts playing for Saul. And David starts fighting for Saul. David kills Goliath. David is in Saul's army, he begins leading some of the men and coming back from one of the battles, the women are singing, Saul has killed his 1000s. But David has killed 10s of 1000s. Saul is really not all together that happy about that. And he begins to try to actively kill David. And so David runs off.

And I put this one verse, stay in 2 Samuel, but there's one verse here from 1 Samuel, chapter 22. And this describes David, and what they did when David left Gath and escaped to the cave of Adullam, when his brothers and his father's household heard about it, they went down to him there, and all those who were in distress, or in debt, or discontented, gathered around him, and he became their commander, about 400 men were with him. Doesn't that sound like a great group of people? The people who are in distress or in debt, or discontented. Can you imagine if you're a farmer and you got a little patch of land there next to the cave, and you're just trying to get by got a little bit of land growing some food, got a few animals, and all sudden there's 400 discontented, in debt, distressed people living next to you. What are you thinking? There goes the neighborhood. Gonna have the move now. Right?

Now, it says 400 Men, I'm gonna guess there was some number of women with them. Right? Because, you know, men don't like to do all the stuff at camp that needs to be done. There were probably animals. They probably had some animals that they could ride. They probably had some animals for food and egg, chickens and eggs and right, this is this is not just, you know a few people, right?

Now, would you describe people who are in distress in debt or discontented as heroes? No, me neither. But these are the people we're going to read about in 2 Samuel. Okay. Because what made these men mighty was the character they gained, and the lies that they lived, and the decisions they made while they were with David. Now, if you remember, from reading this part of the Bible, David had

some kind of a structure of men, he had the three that were very famous, there was the 30 that were famous. And then he had this 400, and the three and the 30, were part of the 400. But these people rose to some amount of fame in the day, and we're still talking about him today. All right.

So let's get going into 2 Samuel. And let's look at the first decision. The first decision that they learned to do was, I will do what's right, even when the odds are stacked against me. I'm like the teacher that gives you the answers before we talk about it. You like that? So here's the answer. This is what they learn to do. I will do what's right, even when the odds are stacked against me. Let's look at 2 Samuel 23:8. Everybody there? It says These are the names of David's mighty warriors: Josheb-Basshebeth, a Tahkemonite, was chief of the Three; he raised his spear against eight hundred men, whom he killed in one encounter. Who is this guy? This is like Rambo, the gladiator and Braveheart all wrapped together in one. Can you imagine 800 people against one and you lose? Have you ever wondered what somebody thought when they were in the last 100? 700 people have gone up against him and died. And you're one of the 100 left. And you're thinking yeah, we got him now. I'd be like, No, man, I'm out of here. Right? This is not meant to be today. Can you imagine surviving this and having to go back and tell your king or your commander? You know that 800 men you had? No more. What happened to them? This one dude! Man. No, thanks, I wouldn't have to tell the king that. Right? I'd man we got overrun. There was 10,000 of them. We fought valiantly, but we just couldn't do it. Right. One guy takes out 800 men. I mean, that's even more than you see in the cheesy kung fu movies where they fight everybody. Right? That's crazy. That's crazy. Okay.

Now, have you ever been there? Have you ever been in a place where you knew the right thing to do, but to do it might mean that you don't survive. And maybe that's not physically. Maybe you're worried about getting canceled. Or you're worried about losing some friends, or you're losing worried about somebody making fun of you. But I think of people like Nelson Mandela, who spent 27 years in prison fighting for a democratic South Africa, or Martin Luther King, who gave his life in pursuit of a dream that would be judged by our character, not the color of our skin.

And retreat is just another word for runaway. Right? If you're a Monty Python fan, you'll get that. We just run away run away. We don't retreat. But retreating is something you know you've got to do carefully. Because retreating doesn't mean you want to run away forever. Retreating means you pull back and you regroup and you get back into the fight. Right. It's a tactical decision to pull back to regroup to rest, and then back and you don't just retreat, retreat, retreat, retreat away. Okay. And there are times when retreating is maybe the best thing to do. You know if there was 700 people that died front of you, maybe if you're the last 100 Retreating is a good idea. But how does that work in today's society? Maybe you're the employee that sees what's happening in the business in the backroom deals and under the table, and you don't want anything to do with it. Maybe you're the spouse that realizes that the other member of this arrangement thinks that the relationship is dead. But you're not going to give up. No retreat. Maybe it's the teen that refuses to go with the flow of the crowd, because he doesn't like where that flow is headed. And he risk losing his friends and being ridiculed to stand his ground. So I want you to write these words. Next to that right there, No retreat. No retreat. these people had a mindset of no retreat. There's a sense of oughtness the way things ought to be. Things ought to be this way, and they don't retreat. And if I can be honest, our generation has lost that a little bit. Right? We don't have a lot of people that like to stand up. Or just like, oh, well, you know, you do your thing. I'll do mine. And you know, try and..... No retreat!

Decision number two, I will not give up even when none stand with me. I will not give up even when none stand with me. 2 Samuel 23:9, 10. Next to him was Eleazar son of Dodai the Ahohite. As one of the three mighty warriors, he was with David when they taunted the Philistines gathered at Pas Dammim for battle. Then the Israelites retreated, but Eleazar stood his ground and struck down the Philistines till his hand grew tired and froze to the sword. The LORD brought about a great victory that day. The troops returned to Eleazar, but only to strip the dead.

So here's the story, right? David takes his 400 men, and they're out there and the Philistines are over there. His arch enemy. And by the way, this is the same place where David killed Goliath. So some number of years, he's back in the same place. And the Philistines are still there. And I can imagine David giving his best speech. Right? Men, we've got this! We can take them! But the men look over there and they start counting and they like there's more of them than there are us. And they

begin to retreat. And David looks down this way. And there's nobody and David looks down this way. And there's one person Eleazar. So David and Eleazar begin to fight. And apparently it was a long fight. It lasted a long time, because when they got done, Eleazar couldn't let go of his sword. Did you ever do this thing when you were kids, and you take your fingers and put it in your hand and squeeze, squeeze real tight. Hold it for about three minutes. And then you take your fingers out, and you can't open your hand. And it takes a minute for your hand to relax before you can open it. And that's what happened to Eliezer. I see kids trying it right, he held on to that sword so tight, all his muscles are just locked, tense as he battled the Philistines all day long. And the Lord brought about a great victory. And when did the troops return? When it was time to strip the dead. Were they any help at all during the fight? No. No.

But there's something about one plus one that equals more than two in these kinds of situations. And David and Eliezer were only two. But God said two is all I need. Right? We can look through history and see the number of times that God didn't need a whole army He reduced Gideons army from 32,000 to 300. To strike down the biggest army that had ever been assembled on the planet at that time. That army was so big, you couldn't count the camels of the infantry. And the infantry is the smallest, I mean, the Calvary, and the Calvary is the smallest part of the army. That army was huge. 300. Moses lowered his hands, and the waters collapsed on the Egyptian army, which was the world power of the time. So God doesn't need 10,000 men. Two is enough.

Who do you have around you, that's going to help you stand? When times get tough, and they're willing to fight all day long. Next to this one, I want you to write no reserve. First group had no retreat in them. This group has no reserve, they left everything on the field.

The third decision is I will stand in the gap for those who are around me. I will stand in the gap for those around me. Same chapter verses 11 and 12. And this is my favorite story of the three. Next to him was Shammah son of Agee the Hararite. When the Philistines banded together at a place where there was a field full of lentils, Israel's troops fled from them. But Shammah took his stand in the middle of the field. He defended it and struck the Philistines down, and the LORD brought about a great victory.

How many of you like lentils? See if it was between life and death in the field of lentils, you can have the lentils for all I'm concerned. They're yours. But Shamar knew that those lentils were probably key to the survival of that little village or town that was there. Right? They don't have Ralph's. Can't just run down and buy something. They've got to grow all their food for the summer, and the winter and lentils store really well, and help you make it through the winter. And without that field, the village is in danger of not surviving the winter, not having enough food to eat. And Shammah is in the field. Maybe he's working in the field, I don't know. And he looks up and he sees the Philistines gathering there. And I can imagine Shamal starting to get ready. They had a way of tying up their cloak kind of around him. And I don't know how they did if they would tie up their cloak. So that was kind of more like shorts, so they can move better. I can imagine him doing that. Tucking his hair into his headpiece. Picking up his his his shield and putting it on his arm, taking out his sword, all the while he's staring at those Philistines gathering. And he's standing in the middle of the field and the Philistines at the other side. Guys were looking at him like, Dude, it's one guy. We got it. It's one guy. Maybe they'd heard the story of the other guy that killed 800 of them and they were leery. I don't know, maybe they thought it was a trap. And it were people laying down in the field or going to jump up when they got out there. But they take a while to attack. I can imagine Shamal just standing there. Come on, come get some. And finally they attack and Shammah begins to fight. And he defends the field and struck the Philistines down. That means he killed them all. And the Lord brought about a great victory

Besides this one I want you to write no regret, no regrets. What are the things that you can do in your everyday life that would bring no regret? Maybe you see a car broken down on the road. You stop the help, that can be risky. Maybe there's a widow that lives down the street that could use a little help with the yard work. Maybe it's reading a book to your son, maybe it's seeing the boy down the street that doesn't have a father and saying, I'm not going to let him do life alone. Maybe it's seeing your neighbor's kid, making the same horrible mistakes that you made. You say, I'm not going to let him go down that path, been there. That's the stuff heroes are made of.

This is what I know. No good, performed for the sake of others, is forgotten by God. No good, performed, for the sake of others, is forgotten by God. And I think

we have the opportunity to live a life that has no reserve, no regret, and no retreat. Right? Jesus shows up 1000 years after David. And Jesus is called the Son of God. He's also called the Son of David a 1000 years later, and David had a ragtag band of, of men, who started out as bumbling, discontented in debt, distressed people, and became known as heroes and mighty men. And Jesus started out with a ragtag group of 12 that couldn't get out of their own way. And they changed the world.

Jesus is still calling people today. Every distressed, every in-debt, every person that is discontented. Jesus can call you to a life of no reserve, no regret, and no retreat.

Something to reflect on, are you willing to take a stand on some moral issues? Even if it costs you something? That's tough.

Your challenge this week is making a decision about what issues are important enough for you to die on that hill. Right? What issues are that important for you? You can't make that decision in the moment. You've got to make that decision beforehand. That's the hill I'm willing to die on.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank you so much. For the things you are doing in our lives, Lord, help us to be the kind of people that live a life of no reserve. No regret, no retreat. Lord, we're the kind of people that are willing to make a stand when others are not, and make a difference in somebody's life. And we may never get fame and fortune and Purple Hearts and military honors and whatever. Lord, that's not why we do it. We do it because it's the right thing to do. It's the thing that you are asking us to do. To show some love and mercy and kindness to the people around us. Be with us this week. Lord, help us to be the kind of heroes you would have us be. Jesus name. Amen.