

Victory in the Lord

2Samuel 8:1-18

According to the website nationalww2museum.org there were over 70000 who conscientiously objected to serving in combat during the war.

While most chose to stay out of the war effort all together around 25000 chose to serve in non-combat roles.

One of those men was Desmond T. Doss of Lynchburg Virginia.

On religious grounds he refused to even carry let alone use a weapon of warfare.

At the same time he felt the cause of the war was just, so when he was drafted in the spring of 1942 instead of objecting he went along with being enlisted and set his mind on becoming a medic.

His refusal to use a weapon earned him the reputation of being a coward in basic training.

His fellow soldiers and his commanding officers harassed him verbally and physically with some even making threats against his life.

They tried to have him discharged and one officer even considered court martialling him.

Despite all of that, he persevered through basic training and was shipped out to the pacific theatre as a medic with the 307th infantry regiment.

It wasn't long before Doss saw combat and quickly earned the respect of the soldiers who had despised him in basic training.

By the time they arrived in Okinawa the men in his regiment had learned to trust them with their lives and he had earned two bronze stars.

As they attempted to take an area known as Hacksaw Ridge they fell under severe enemy fire.

The ridge was a cliff nearly 400 feet high with the top 35 feet being so steep that they needed a cargo net to make the ascent.

The battle reached the point where the soldiers were ordered to retreat; however, about 75 men were wounded to the point where they could not retreat under their own power.

Instead of retreating Private Doss stayed in the line of fire and by himself pulled those 75 men out of danger lowering them down the 35 part of the cliff with a rope.

Time and again putting himself in the line of fire to save the lives of his fellow soldiers.

He continued to do that day after day until he was severely wounded from a grenade and a sniper's bullet.

In October of 1945 he became the only conscientious objector in WWII to be awarded the Congressional Medal of Honour by President Harry Truman.

Truman shook his hand and said to him, "I'm proud of you. You really deserve this. I consider this a greater honor than being president."

It is an inspirational story of perseverance and overcoming incredible odds.

Because of soldiers and stories like that the U.S. and the allied forces were able to win the war.

It is because of that kind of bravery and sacrifice that we enjoy the life that we do here in Canada.

As important as that was and as much as we should be thankful for the blessings that we have enjoyed as a result, we need something more.

[Who knows how long the benefits and freedoms we currently enjoy will last. I suspect a good number of folks from that generation might be a bit disappointed with current state of our society, but that does not mean we should be discouraged or fearful as believers. Our hope as Christians is not in the victories won by men, but our hope is in the victory won by our LORD and saviour. That is what our text this morning points us to. In **2Samuel 8:1-18** we read of David winning multiple battles against Israel's enemies and those victories come because of God. Because of that, I believe these verses have some important lessons for us about victory in the LORD. If you have read the end of the Bible then you know that God wins. Here are some things we need to know about that. First, we need to know that...]

Point #1 – God's victory requires the defeat of His enemies. (Verses 1-6)

If the LORD allows rebellion against Him to continue indefinitely and without consequence He denies the objective supremacy of His Being which is impossible for Him to do and therefore He must prevail in all things.

Each of the nations mentioned in these verses has a history of rebellion against the LORD and his people.

The first group mentioned is one that comes up time and again in the account of Samuel, the Philistines.

They lived to the west of the Israelites along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea.

The roots of their rebellion against God go back generations. They were descendants of Ham, the son of Noah who came under the curse of his father for his immoral behaviour.

Over the generations they plunged themselves deep into idolatrous religion and as a result rejected God's plan to give the land of Canaan to Abraham's descendants.

Because of that they constantly invaded and plundered Israel up until the time of David.

At the end of chapter five it says that David had been able to push the Philistines back into their territory but here in **verse 1** we read this.

Metheg-ammah means 'mother city' which is likely a reference to the capital city.

That means that David has been able to take the defeat of the Philistines to another level. More than driving them out of Israel's territory he has gained control of theirs as well, which was what God had promised to Abraham.

Verse 2 tells us about the nation of Moab.

The Moabites descended from Abraham's nephew Lot as the result of immorality.

They turned to false gods, had attempted to curse Israel through Balaam, had enticed the Israelites into idolatry, and had oppressed them in the time of the judges.

At the same time, God had graciously given them a land, had kept them from destruction, and in His providence had made a Moabite woman named Ruth David's great grandmother.

Despite God's graciousness and David's family connection Moab once again comes against Israel, but they are defeated.

Their rebellion leads to death, but there is also some grace here as a third of the army is spared and becomes subject to David's rule.

Verses 3-6 tell us about another idolatrous king named Hadadezer.

This foreign king brings a substantial army "to restore his power at the river Euphrates".

Land he once controlled he wants to control again. That desire is contrary to God's promise in Genesis 15:18 and he is defeated by David.

According to verse 5 the Syrians, who also share a common ancestor with Israel, “come to help” Hadadezer.

There is some powerful irony there because the name Hadadezer means “Hadad is help”.

Hadad was the name of a false god of the Canaanites.

So the king whose name means a false god will help needs help and that help fails because it is opposed to the true God.

We see that is **verse 6**.

Philistines, Moabites, Hadadezer, and the Arameans are all put under the rule of David because the LORD gave the victory.

That is the way it must be.

[Tomorrow is Remembrance Day which we celebrate in Canada. It was first celebrated as a commemoration of the signing of the ceasefire agreement to end World War I which happened on the eleventh day, of the eleventh month, and the eleventh hour. The reason why that deal was signed is because the Germans surrendered, they accepted the fact that they were defeated. If the Germans were not defeated by the allies, the fighting would have continued.]

That same thing is true with individuals and nations that live in rebellion against the LORD.

In order for creation to enjoy the reign of the LORD to the fullest degree, the enemies of God must be defeated.

What we see here with King David is only a foreshadow of a much greater victory in the future.

Have you ever read about the coming of Jesus? Revelation 19:15 says He comes with a sword in His mouth and uses that sword to “strike down the nations”.

God is gracious beyond measure giving boundless opportunities for people to repent, believe on Christ, and be saved but He will defeat every single enemy that persists in rebellion because He will be victorious over sin and death and hell.

[I have no doubt there are many who would say, “God should just leave us alone and let us do what we want.” I’d be willing to bet those same people don’t like all the evil human beings do and all the suffering that goes along with it. Guess what, if the LORD doesn’t care about defeating His enemies then evil will persist. If God goes on sustaining creation in its present state then nothing will ever change. The Bible tells us of something far better. It tells of the defeat of God’s enemies, of a restored creation which will testify to Jesus’ victory forever. We see a glimpse of that in the second lesson of our text this morning. The second lesson is that...]

Point #2 – God’s victory produces God’s praise. (Verses 7-14)

When God acts in creation to defeat those opposed to Him, His people respond with worship.

One of the main results of warfare in the ancient world was the control of resources.

That happens here.

It has already been said twice, once in verse 2 and again in verse 5 that the nations David defeated became his ‘servants’ and they ‘brought tribute’.

We see that as a theme in **verses 7-10.**

He gets ‘shields of gold’ from the servants of Hadadezer.

Shields are used by soldiers to defend themselves in battle and were critical to the strength and capability of an army.

What does it mean if your shield is taken away? It means you have been defeated and have lost the ability to defend yourself.

Why make shields of gold? Because you want to display your wealth and power to the world.

That is taken from Hadadezer and given to David.

He also takes bronze from cities of Hadadezer, we’ll come back to that in a moment.

Verses 9-10 interject a foreign king named Toi.

Toi had no conflict with David, but was quite happy that David had defeated Hadadezer.

Toi sends his son ‘Joram’, whose name interestingly means ‘Yahweh (the one true God’s proper name) is exalted.

While we know little of this foreign king’s religion we can at the very least say he knew the God of Israel was worthy of worship.

Joram brings tribute to David on behalf of his father.

He brings him silver, gold, and bronze.

The impression here is that David received large amounts of gold, silver, and bronze as a result of winning these battles.

Let’s look at what he does with it in **verses 11-14.**

He dedicates all of it to the Lord.

What is really cool about that is that years later when Solomon builds the temple he uses at least some of what David dedicates here.

The bronze of this passage is specifically mentioned in 1Chronicles 18:8 where it says Solomon uses it to build ‘the sea’ of the temple, pillars, and other vessels of bronze.

The sea was a giant basin used to keep water in the temple courts for the washing that needed to happen as the priests carried out their duties of worship.

The sea was roughly 45 feet in circumference, the bowl was 7 ½ feet deep, and 3-4 inches thick, and it could hold about 44000 litres of water.

That is a lot of bronze and much more was used in the temple.

1Kings 7:51 also specifically mentions Solomon bringing into the temple the silver and gold that his father had dedicated.

David shows here that he understands what it says at the end of *verse 14*.

This is God’s victory, David knows it, and turns himself towards the praise of God which is felt in the life of God’s people for centuries.

[We do this all the time with lesser things. I do it all the time with power tools. Many times in my life I have cut lumber with a hand saw. I vividly remember one occasion when I was about 14 or 15 cutting through a 2x10 with a handsaw. It was a good amount of work to make it through and then after two or three cuts I got to use a skill saw for the first time. It sailed through the board in seconds and the first thought that came to my mind was, “This thing is amazing!” That the way it is. When we see how good something or someone is we offer praise.]

Have you ever had a clear experience of God’s victory in your life, where you just had a clear sense that the LORD had acted decisively.

If we are thinking rightly about how God is active in the world every moment of every day, then we will see Him at work in great and small things.

How many times has He delivered us from evil today?

How many times has He overcome things that we could never overcome?

If we aren’t praising Him I would suggest to you that we are not paying attention.

[If we have a right understanding of the gospel, that Jesus died on the cross to make us right with God, that we can do nothing good to redeem ourselves, but believing in the perfection of Jesus' life and the merits of His death on our behalf washes us clean and makes us right with God, if we understand that and believe that we are going to praise Him. If we truly believe that Jesus walked out of the tomb on the third day declaring victory over sin and death, we are going to praise Him. Why? Why is praising the LORD because of His victories something that makes sense to do? Our third lesson this morning, I believe, gives us a big part of the answer. So far we have seen that God's victory requires the defeat of His enemies, it produces praise, and thirdly we see here that...]

Point #3 – God's victory benefits God's people. (Verses 15-18)

Human flourishing happens when individuals and societies live under His rule.

The writer gives us a sense of what it was like in Israel after "The LORD gave victory to David." (Verse 15-18)

Verses 16-18 tell us a bit about the people involved in running the kingdom.

Joab the son of Zeruiah, David's nephew, is 'over the army.'

He is a problematic figure from time to time in David's life, but at this point though, Joab is serving in an important role as commander of the army.

When it says 'the LORD gave victory to David' the means by which that happened was the army.

A strong army meant a secure and stable country.

Jehoshaphat is mentioned next. He has a great name which means "Yahweh has judged".

It says here at the end of verse 16 that he was 'recorder' a word most literally translated as 'causing to remember'.

He was probably in charge of keeping records in the kingdom which is really important.

One of the key reasons individuals and nations drift away from God is they forget what He has done.

Zadok and Ahimelech were priests reminding us of the importance of worship in the nation under David, and Seraiah was secretary a job similar to Jehoshaphat.

Benaiah, whose name means 'Yahweh has built up' was in charge of the Cherethites and the Pelethites.

Cherethites means executioners and pelethites means couriers.

Commentator Carl Keil suggests that these two groups function primarily as the king's personal body guard something like the 'secret service' of our own day.

Lastly, David sons are mentioned as being 'priests' which initially seems wrong.

David's sons are not Levites or descendants of Aaron so they are not supposed to serve at priests.

After reading a few commentaries I learned that the word translated priest has the sense of being an 'adviser' or 'high ranking official'.

That makes sense given that fact that we see multiple examples of Levitical priests like Zadok and Ahimelech acting as advisors to King David.

The parallel passage to this in 1Chronicles 18:17 uses a different word making it clear that they served as chief officials/advisors to David and not as priests in tabernacle worship.

The purpose of mentioning all of these people relates back to verse 15.

These guys were a significant part of David's reign 'over all Israel'.

Why was David reigning over all Israel? Because 'the LORD gave victory to David wherever he went.'

What is the result for the nation of Israel?

Look again at the end of verse 15.

'David administered justice and equity to **all** his people'.

Some translations say 'justice and righteousness for all his people'.

The result of the LORD giving all of this victory to David is that His people were being governed according to God's laws applied to all of God's people in the same way.

People and property valued and protected.

Whether you are wealthy or poor you are treated the same under the law.

Safe from those who want to harm the nation and a just society within the nation.

I don't know about you but that sounds like a good place to live.

That is what happens when God's enemies are defeated, it is good for all people.

[I want to suggest to you this morning that western civilization has done the most good for human flourishing than any other civilization in the last 2500 years. Now I would be the first to

admit there have been serious problems along the way, but when placed side by side it is hard to argue with the results of education, health care, and economy. I would further suggest to you that the primary reason it has been like this is because it has been built on the foundation of biblical morality. Yes there have been failings, big ones, but those failings have been a result of not following the bible close enough. I would also ask you how many of the people in our day who are living in the West that are decrying how terrible the West is want to live somewhere else? Not many. Here is the thing, if they were to have their way and cut Christian morality out of society they would end up living in a society that they do not want to live in.]

If we were to go out on the street and ask people, “Do you want live in peace and prosperity?”

What do you think most people would say?

If we go out on the street and ask people, “Do you want to live under the rule of God?”

What do you think most people would say?

Here is the thing, you can’t have one without the other.

That is exactly what the hope of the Christian faith is.

Not the ebb and flow of human government, but the eternal reign of King Jesus in the New Heavens and the New Earth.

Why do we have any reason to think that one day, in the light of God’s glory there will be no more death, mourning, crying, or pain?

Because God will be victorious and it will be for the eternal good of His people.

When every enemy is defeated, there will be glorious praise.

Just listen to the words of **Revelation 7:9-12** describing the scene in heaven.

Amen, Victory is the Lord’s.