

JOAB ... who lacked staying power
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(1 KINGS 1: 7)

Joab was one of the greatest of David's servants, and it will ever be a source of regret that this fine man failed in the end. There are details which suggest that provocation forced the valiant warrior into error ; but whether or not this is true, he who had run his race so well, failed near the winning post! There are many instances of this man's chivalrous conduct, but the following, @ quotations will provide a most suggestive study.

His Great Fame

" And David reigned over all Israel ; and David executed judgment and justice unto all his people. And Joab the son of Zeruah was over the host " (I Sam. 8: 15, 16). We are not conversant with all the details concerning the promotion of this intrepid warrior, but it may be safely assumed that his acts of bravery, his ability to lead men, and his unwavering courage, brought him to prominence. David recognized his greatness, and conferred upon him the honor which every Israelite coveted. Joab's subsequent record vindicated David's decision.

His Great Friendship

Joab knew the details concerning the flight of Prince Absalom, but prudently minded his own business. Yet as the years passed, he recognized " . . . the soul of king David longed to go forth unto Absalom: for he was comforted concerning the death of Amnon, seeing he was dead " (2 Sam. 13: 39). Daily the wise and friendly commander watched his royal master, and ultimately decided to arrange a reconciliation. His commission to the wise woman of Tekoah has been previously studied. (See Bible Pinnacles, p. 43.) It is sufficient now to remember that through the kindly intervention of this thoughtful man, David's sadness was banished. The king did not act very graciously in the matter of Absalom's return, but at least Joab had done his best.

His Great Faithfulness

Utterly unselfish and unquestionably loyal, Joab proceeded to do his duty, and on one notable occasion refused to press home his victorious attack on an enemy stronghold until his master had arrived, to be credited with the success of the campaign. Probably this would rank as his greatest act of self-denial. Joab desired David to have the pre-eminence in all things. A runner was despatched with news of the impending victory, and the king was urged to come immediately, to receive the praises of his people (2 Sam. 12: 26-31). This act of self-effacement deserved the greatest honor in the kingdom.

His Great Fearlessness

It is not true to say that love is blind. This man adored his master, but he was able to see the faults in David's attitude. Probably it required far more courage to rebuke the king than it did to go forth against an invading army. The wounds of a friend are faithful, and on several occasions the brave general quietly rebuked his monarch. David resented these admonitions, but subsequent events proved Joab to be right. After the death of Absalom, David's sorrow grieved the people, and it was Joab's advice which prevented serious repercussions. Later, the king stupidly embarked upon a

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course of action displeasing to God. It was suicidal ; but
only Joab had the courage to oppose the royal command.
His objections were over-ruled, and as a result seventy
thousand people perished. The king's stupidity was un-
imaginable, but alas, David had wandered far from God.

His Great Folly

Let us not be too severe in our condemnation of this
weakening soldier. The increasing folly of the aged king, and
the whispers that Solomon had been commissioned to execute
the great general (I Kings 2:3-6), were sufficient to disillu-
sion any man. Mistrust and intrigue affected the frustrated
leader, and the renegade Adonijah found him to be fertile
soil in which to plant seeds of rebellion (i Kings 1:7). Joab
was like a wonderful racehorse whose stout heart and untiring
legs had brought it to within inches of the winning post.
Modern men would say that, after running a grand race, " he
was pipped on the post." What a shame! It would have
been better had he retired from the political scene before
he blemished his record of service. We should learn from
the story, and bc determined to run with patience the race
that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and
Finisher of our faith (Heb. 12:1-2).

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