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A table of contents for *The Bible Student* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_bible-student\\_01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bible-student_01.php)

# PEN PORTRAITS FROM OLD RECORDS

W. WILCOX

## 4. Men of the Tribes

1 Chron. 5: 18-22

The sons of the two and a half tribes who settled on the eastern side of Jordan having been fully enumerated, a short record of them is given in explanation of how they came to settle there instead of pressing on into Canaan. Their own capabilities are first noted and then the further ways by which they succeeded in their contests with the former inhabitants of that region. These records are worthy of our notice. They were:

I. *Men of Valour.* They were brave men—'sons of valour'. They were proceeding against men of tested ability, who had been engaged in many a fight against those who would have wrested their strongholds from them, and they were doing so with a bravery:

(a) Born of the known justice of their cause. The enemy barred their way to the promised land, engaged in immoral and corrupt practices, worshipped idols, and abused the possessions of which they had become the lords using them for evil purposes. These men of courage closed in upon the enemy and stormed their strongholds.

The believer is similarly engaged in a conflict and fights in an unceasing battle. The realization that he fights against evil in high places, against forces of corruption in earthly relationships and against powers that are hostile to spiritual growth, stiffens his courage and enables him to pursue this relentless warfare with unabated force.

(b) Sustained by a consciousness of harmony with the will of God. He is not fighting merely for the love of a fight, nor to attain selfish ends, nor to obtain a name, but he fights because he is so commanded of God, because He is opposing those that are hostile to the things of God, and because he desires to see God's purposes realized.

These great principles must animate every contestant in spiritual warfare, he must be in line with the Will of God. That

will he comes to know as he dwells in the Word and allows the Word to dwell in him, and as he yields unreservedly to the guidance of the Holy Spirit Whose office it is to bring to his understanding the communicated Word in which is found expressed that holy and perfect Will of God.

(c) Increased as victory follows victory. Each battle fought and won spurs the warrior to new contests, and each battle should be won when there is the assurance that the battle is the Lord's and the believer not only battles *for* Christ, but finds that Christ is with him to sustain him and to aid him in the fight.

Each experience of this divine aid strengthens the resolve to fight through to the end, and so to be able to enter into possession of the God given inheritance and to enjoy it for ever.

2. *Men of Strength.* 'They were able to bear buckler and sword'.

(a) They were neither novices nor weaklings, but men who were able to bear the heavy accoutrements of war and to wield their weapons with striking power and effective force.

Men who would engage in service for the Lord need to be strong—strong in the truth, strong in spiritual power, strong in the Lord. The novice and the weakling are easily overcome and so bring disaster to themselves and dishonour to the Name of Him in Whose cause they fight.

(b) They were men who were practised in the use of their weapons. They did not neglect the constant handling of those weapons, but knew their use and increased their powers of using them by regular practice.

What is needed so much in our day is this ability 'to handle the Word of God', to accustom oneself to using it and testing its strength, to know it in all its parts and to find its effectiveness in every field of action, and having proved its value in former contests to be able to use it even more effectively in present engagements.

(c) They were men who were renewed in strength by partaking of the food provided from the land they conquered. It is evident, if the believer is to continue to be strong for the fight, he must renew his strength day by day, partaking of the good things of

the inheritance, of which he has gained possession by the good hand of God upon him. Nothing can take the place of this daily exercise of feeding upon 'the old corn of the land', of 'meditating in the law of the Lord day and night', of 'knowing the *mind* of the Lord'.

3. *Men of Skill.* They were 'skilful in war'. They were men who had learned from others as well as by experience the way in which to meet the strategy and forces of their opponents. They did not trust to haphazard plans or hastily conceived schemes, nor did they leave the hazards of war to unskilled soldiers. They had diligently prepared for their task. In like manner the believer is constantly urged to be diligent in his preparation, to study to show himself approved unto God, and to be ready to give a reason for the hope that is in him. In each case he is reminded of the skill and subtleties of his enemy and of his need for watchfulness, alertness and readiness.

But this is not all. Human capabilities and readiness for the onset might be of considerable advantage, but alone were insufficient. There was a further and more important aid needed. Three things are mentioned,

(a) *They cried unto God.* Even while the battle was raging and their courage, strength and skill were being put to the test, they found their need of Divine help.

'They cried' there was an urgency born out of conflict as there should be in our prayers, not mere generalizations covering wide fields of which we have little knowledge and less concern, but a cry—it may consist of but few words, or it may be of greater length according to the nature of the need—a cry that in its utterance shows that there is an urgency for help to be given, for God to intervene and fulfil His oft-given promises.

'They cried'—there was an insistency derived from necessity—a felt need that if help were not forthcoming, their skill and efforts would be unavailing.

Our Lord taught His disciples the value of insistent, or persistent prayer. Such prayer shows that the need is real and demands the attention of Him to Whom the cry is made.

It shows that it is not a mere habitual expression of a few words employed as a prayer, but a cry which only a felt need can cause to arise, a cry in which there is an outgoing of the soul to Him from Whom help is desired.

'They cried'—there was an immediacy arising from a present situation. The cry was not about something remote from their lives, something about which there could be little exercise of heart, but a cry that showed a present need, an appeal for immediate help, a prayer from the midst of battle.

Lessons regarding our prayer life are here seen in clear illustration. We cry to One Who is ever willing to hear and ever gracious to answer. Then let us come with definite request and earnest appeal even while engaged in the heat of battle in which the ultimate issues rest in His hands.

(b) *They put their trust in the Lord.* Here was the Reliance of Trust. They relied wholly on that God Who was able to come to their aid. There was no doubt as to His doing so.

Paul joyfully exclaims 'Who hath delivered, Who doth deliver and in Whom we trust that He will yet deliver'. Experience has proved that He is faithful to His promises and therefore the believer may rely upon His coming to his aid in response to his cry.

There is the Comfort of Trust. What a comfort there is to the one who knows his God and is able to say, 'If God be for us who can be against us?'

There is a Rest in Trust, a repose to the soul, 'In His love I rest'.

(c) *They were helped.* Their cry and their trust were not in vain. It was help that was timely, sufficient and satisfying. By means of it they overcame the enemy, entered the land, and obtained the inheritance.

We may find 'grace to help in time of need'. We may boldly say, 'The Lord is my helper'. We may thus be 'helped of God'.

Learn from these old records how men of former ages trusted in the Lord and found that their trust was not in vain, and may we heed the exhortation; 'Whose faith follow'.