

# POWER

"... the gospel ... is the power of God unto salvation ..." (Romans 1:16)

## JOAB: DAVID'S MILITARY CAPTAIN WHO HAD HIS OWN AGENDA (PART 3)

by B. J. Clarke

In the previous installments of this study, we noticed Joab's military accomplishments and main agenda. In this concluding part of our study, we will notice one final point.

### Joab's Mandated Assassination

Time marched on and David "was old and stricken in years" (1 Kings 1:1). As the end of his life drew nigh, his son Adonijah, whose mother Haggith was also the mother of Absalom, "exalted himself, saying, I will be king" (1 Kings 1:5). The record reveals that Adonijah "conferred with Joab the son of Zeruiah, and with Abiathar the priest: and they following Adonijah helped him" (1 Kings 1:7).

Not everyone supported Adonijah's quest for the throne. "Zadok the priest, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and Nathan the prophet, and Shimei, and Rei, and the mighty men which belonged to David, were not with Adonijah" (1 Kings 1:8). This, however, did not stop Adonijah from scheduling an invitation only feast to inaugurate his reign. "But Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah, and the mighty men, and Solomon his brother, he called not" (1 Kings 1:10).

Nathan was aware that God had decreed that Solomon would be the next king (1 Chron. 22:9-10) and thus he expressed his concerns to Bathsheba about the actions of Adonijah. Together, Bathsheba and Nathan approached king David and got him to reaffirm both his will and God's will that Solomon be the next king (1 Kings 1:11-31). David charged Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah, the next military commander, to anoint Solomon as king at Gihon. "Zadok the priest took an horn of oil out of the tabernacle, and anointed Solomon. And they blew the trumpet; and all the people said, God save king Solomon" (1 Kings 1:39). The people celebrated so loudly "that the earth rent with the sound of them" (1 Kings 1:40).

Meanwhile, the guests at Adonijah's celebratory feast heard all of this commotion and "when Joab heard the sound of the trumpet, he said,

Wherefore is this noise of the city being in an uproar?" (1 Kings 1:41). The answer was not long in coming. While Joab was still speaking, Jonathan the son of Abiathar the priest came and said to Adonijah, "Verily our lord king David hath made Solomon king" (1 Kings 1:43). This news certainly ruined the atmosphere at Adonijah's party! The guests with Adonijah "were afraid, and rose up, and went every man his way. And Adonijah feared because of Solomon, and arose, and went, and caught hold on the horns of the altar" (1 Kings 49-50). The Believer's Bible Commentary explains:

Among all nations the altar was a place of asylum for criminals deserving of death, but in Israel it was intended originally for unintentional manslaughter (Ex 21:14). "By grasping the horns of the altar, the culprit placed himself under the protection of the saving and helping grace of God, which wipes away sin, and therefore abolishes punishment" (Keil, p. 25).

Solomon granted Adonijah a conditional pardon and sent him on his way (1 Kings 1:53).

As David's life ebbed away he called Solomon to give him some last words. A significant portion of what he said had to do with Joab. He told Solomon,

Moreover thou knowest also what Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me, and what he did to the two captains of the hosts of Israel, unto Abner the son of Ner, and unto Amasa the son of Jether, whom he slew, and shed the blood of war in peace, and put the blood of war upon his girdle that was about his loins, and in his shoes that were on his feet. Do therefore according to thy wisdom, and let not his hoar head go down to the grave in peace (1 Kings 2:5-6).

David's words indicate what he truly thought of Joab. Joab's time of grace had run out. Perhaps David realized on his deathbed that he should have done something about Joab long ago.

Nevertheless, David did not want Solomon to experience the same grief of having to deal with Joab that David had experienced. Therefore, he counseled Solomon to use his wisdom to find the right time to punish Joab to death.

Adonijah did not honor his agreement to go to his own house and leave the kingdom to Solomon. Instead, he tried to manipulate Bathsheba to arrange a marriage between him and Abishag the Shunnamite (1 Kings 2:13-24). Apparently, Adonijah wanted to use this woman who had been so influential in David's last days to legitimize his claim to the throne. He would never get the chance because Solomon sent Benaiah to put him to death (1 Kings 2:25). Solomon also thrust out Abiathar from being priest (1 Kings 2:27).

When Joab heard what had happened to Adonijah and Abiathar he could read the writing on the wall. Anticipating that he was next, he "fled unto the tabernacle of the LORD, and caught hold on the horns of the altar" (1 Kings 2:28). Solomon was informed of what Joab had done and ordered Benaiah to assassinate Joab. When Benaiah ordered Joab to come forth away from the altar, he refused and said, "Nay; but I will die here" (1 Kings 2:30). Possibly, Joab held out hope that as long as he clung to the altar they would never shed his blood in such a holy place.

In fact, Benaiah was reluctant to kill Joab while he clutched the horns of the altar and thus he returned to tell Solomon of Joab's refusal to come out. Solomon was not about to be held hostage by Joab's desperate tactic and so he mandated Joab's assassination even if Joab remained at the altar. He told Benaiah "to fall upon him, and bury him; that thou mayest take away the innocent blood, which Joab shed, from me, and from the house of my father" (1 Kings 2:31). Having received his orders, "Benaiah the son of Jehoiada went up, and fell upon him, and slew him: and he was buried in his own house in the wilderness. And the king put Benaiah the son of Jehoiada in his room over the host" (1 Kings 2:34-35).

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From the last actions of Joab's life we learn that **those who have a personal agenda often give themselves false hope because of their misinterpretation of Scripture.** Joab knew that the Law of Moses offered pardon to those who fled to the altar, but if Joab had read the Law more carefully he would have known that Exodus 21:13-14 did not apply to the man who deliberately murdered someone. Furthermore, Deuteronomy 19:10-13 taught clearly that the one guilty of deliberately shedding blood should not be exempted from punishment!

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A final lesson is seen in just how quickly and easily Joab was replaced by Benaiah. **Those who spend their lives promoting a personal agenda often become self-inflated with the importance of their agenda and their contributions to carrying out such an agenda.** We must learn that there is no indispensable man and the only indispensable agenda is the plan God has set forth for us to follow!

### Modern Applications

Joab was by no means the last man to push his personal agenda to the point of destroying others. Judas had a personal agenda of getting rich even at the expense of the life of Jesus. From the time that he covenanted with the chief priests for thirty pieces of silver "he sought opportunity to betray him" (*Matt. 26:16*). That was his agenda!

The apostle Paul noted that some preachers of his day were more motivated by an agenda of self-promotion than a sincere desire to preach the good news of Christ. They sought to make things harder for Paul so that they might be personally exalted. Their selfish agenda created envy and strife (*Phil. 1:15-16*).

The agenda of Diotrephes is spelled out clearly enough for us in the book of 3 John. His agenda was to be the boss, no matter who it hurt or how much it hurt the church! He loved to have "the preeminence" (*3 John 9*)! He had no respect for the apostolic authority of John for he spoke malicious words against him (*3 John 10*). He had no respect for the authority of Christ as evidenced by the fact that he acted as if he were the sole standard for determining which brethren should be received and which brethren should be rejected and cast out of the church (*3 John 10*).

Sadly, it is still true today that certain brethren are obsessed with advancing their own agendas to the detriment of the local church and the brotherhood as a whole. Their *modus operandi* is strikingly similar to that of Joab.

**1. They do not hesitate to rebel against those in authority to accomplish their purposes.** Modern day change agents are not bashful to rebel against the will of godly elderships in order to do their own will. They do not like to be governed! They do not want to submit (*Heb. 13:7, 17*) and so they threaten the elders with withdrawing their contributions or

membership if the eldership refuses to allow such things as choirs, dramatic skits, or even instrumental music.

**2. They are willing to use deceit to accomplish their goals.** Brethren who have an agenda will distort the truth if they deem it necessary to turn brethren against other brethren. This happens in our brotherhood when faithful brethren are falsely accused in certain brotherhood papers of things they have not actually said or done.

It can also happen in the local church. This author knows of a situation where an "associate minister" confessed to the "pulpit minister" that he had been telling lies to the eldership about him in an attempt to elevate himself in their eyes. He said, "Every time you stood in the pulpit to preach I seethed inside because you had what I wanted. So, I amplified your faults and lied to the elders about you in hopes that it would bring you down and elevate me in their eyes." The pulpit minister was shocked by these admissions because the associate had always been so nice and warm to his face. As he warmly clasped his brother's right hand of fellowship, he was unaware of the dagger in the brother's other hand!

**3. They are willing to destroy others/the church to get what they want.** How sad that some are more concerned about their personal advancement, or retaliating against those who have hurt their feelings, than they are concerned with the peace and harmony of the local church/brotherhood. Like Joab, they become assassins, not by literally shedding blood but by engaging in character assassination!

**4. They are always looking for information that they can use against others** so that they might manipulate them into doing what they want them to do. They are constantly in the fault-finding mode because they can use these faults as ammunition to turn people against brethren who don't share their same agenda.

**5. They often hide behind the work of others to get what they want!** They often put words in the mouths of others and lurk in the shadows while others do "their dirty work" for them! They will plant seeds of doubt in other people's minds about one or more of the elders. They will constantly find negative things to say about the preacher, hoping to turn other brethren against him. Sadly, sometimes the most vocal critic of another elder is a fellow

elder. Sometimes the most vocal critic of a preacher is a fellow preacher in the same congregation. But instead of speaking face to face with the objects of their criticisms these critics would rather stir things up behind the scenes. They don't have the courage to talk to the elder(s) face to face. They don't have the brotherly love to go directly to the preacher and talk to him face to face. They would rather talk about him behind his back until others get so worked up that they go to the elders and suggest/demand his removal.

**6. They often progress (or should we say digress) to the point that they publicize their lack of respect for authority.** If working quietly in the background doesn't get the job done then those who have an agenda will often go public with their rebellion. By going public, they create a "line in the sand" moment when brethren feel compelled to choose a side. This almost always leads to a church/brotherhood split!

**7. They are often cruel in the advancement of their personal agenda.** It has been said that brethren often treat one another worse than people in the world treat one another. Some of the most cruel and heartless behavior imaginable is seen in those who are supposed to be brethren!

**8. They are not bashful about recruiting others to help them carry it out.** If some brethren would work as hard evangelizing as they do in proselytizing others to assist them in their selfish agendas, the church would be growing instead of dying.

**9. They create unnecessary burdens that other people have to bear!** How many unnecessary problems exist in the local church/brotherhood all because of someone's personal agenda? How many lost sheep would shepherds be able to find if they were not so busy trying to keep someone's personal agenda from splitting the church? How much help could certain members of the church offer to the elders in looking for lost sheep if these members were more interested in souls than self? How much work could be done by our brotherhood if we were not threatened with division by those who are more interested in self-promotion than spiritual devotion?

**10. They are very quick to blame and accuse others for problems they**

**themselves have caused.** Ahab blamed Elijah for being the troubler of Israel when it was really the other way around (*1 Kings 18:17-18*). Joab blamed David's grief over Absalom as the cause of unrest in the nation, not bothering to realize that he himself had brought this about in the first place by murdering Absalom. Likewise, some brethren cause division in the local church and then blame the elders and preachers for the existence of division in the local church. Some lament the division in the brotherhood without bothering to realize that they contributed to this division by their character assassination of certain innocent brethren.

**11. They will sometimes turn on their own relatives to achieve their personal goals.** We have often noted that some have too much loyalty to their relatives and not enough loyalty to Christ (*Matt. 10:34-37*). On the other hand, there are times when brethren have been enticed into following another brother's personal agenda and have turned against other family members who refused to follow. Additionally, some family members selfishly insist on pursuing their personal agenda of living like they want to live even if it destroys their relationship with family members who still love God and the Bible.

**12. They will often recruit their supporters by implying that faithfulness to God necessitates embracing their personal agenda.** Sometimes brethren get their feelings hurt and want to lash out at those who have hurt them. They want others to sympathize with them but they do not want to appear petty by recruiting followers solely on the basis of their hurt feelings. Therefore, they look for something that would legitimize their opposition to a certain brother/sister as a matter of doctrine and not just a matter of hurt feelings. Before you know it, what started out as a personal matter between brethren has now been exalted to a matter of faith! Although it is not stated in these exact words, the impression left by some brethren is that in order for you to be on the Lord's side you must be on my side! This would be no problem if we are talking truly about a matter of faith, but in too many instances brethren are pressured to take sides over what is nothing more than a personal vendetta against another brother or brethren!

**13. They are often self-deceived and do not see themselves as they really are.**

Some brethren have genuinely deceived themselves into believing that they are doing the local church/brotherhood a service by pushing their private agenda. In fact, some of them have convinced themselves that they are doing God a service by pushing their personal agenda. Jesus told His apostles that the time would come when those who killed them would think that they were doing God a service (*John 16:2*). Saul of Tarsus was sincerely convinced that he ought to do many things that were contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth (*Acts 26:9*). He thought he was right but he was wrong!

Likewise, those who push personal agendas to the point of assassinating the character of certain brethren may think that they are doing God a service. They may think that they ought to do what they are doing, but that doesn't mean that they are right. Saul of Tarsus awoke to see the error of his ways. Our prayer is that those who are driven to carry out their own agendas to the detriment of the body of Christ would also "see the light."

**14. Those who have a reputation for advancing their own personal agenda cause people to wonder what their motives are even when they promote what is right.** One of the unfortunate byproducts of having a reputation for self-promotion is that even when you promote the right things people are suspicious as to your motives. Jesus said, "By their fruits ye shall know them" (*Matt. 7:20*). A brother or sister in the church may have a good suggestion, or may even have a justifiable objection to a decision made by the eldership. However, if this brother/sister/couple has a reputation for always seeking their own way at the expense of the church, then their credibility is severely damaged even when they are promoting the right way.

**15. They often possess a false sense of security because of their ignorance/misinterpretation of Scripture.** The Pharisees knew a lot of Scriptures but they often misapplied them. Furthermore, there were other Scriptures that they did not know or give enough weight to in their teaching and practice. They viewed themselves as God's faithful servants but Jesus painted a different picture. Jesus told the multitude and His disciples to follow their teaching insofar as it was a true representation of the Law of Moses, but He



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## JOAB: DAVID'S MILITARY CAPTAIN WHO HAD HIS OWN AGENDA

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also told them not to imitate the behavior of the Pharisees (*Matt. 23:1-3*).

Like Joab, the Pharisees were very much interested in self-promotion. It was all about them! They had to have the chief seats, and they loved to wear religious titles that drew attention to their positions of prominence (*Matt. 23:5-9*). They had an agenda but it did not come from God! Like Diotrephes they viewed themselves as the sole determiners of who would and would not enter into the kingdom (*Matt. 23:13*). When it was their interest to do so they would reject the authority of God and try to create loopholes in the Law of Moses so that they could do things their own way (*Matt. 23:16-22*).

Because they were doing some of the little things right they were deceived into thinking they were alright. However, Jesus informed them that they had omitted some of the weightier matters of the law: judgment, mercy and faith (*Matt. 23:23*). Outwardly, they appeared righteous. Inwardly, they were filthy and dirty (*Matt. 23:25-28*). They did not see themselves as they really were. They claimed that they would never have participated in shedding the blood of God's prophets, like their fathers had done (*Matt. 23:29-30*). Yet, Jesus told them that they themselves would kill, scourge and crucify some of the very prophets sent to them in their day (*Matt. 23:34-35*). Like Joab, they would be responsible for shedding the blood of innocent men! And like Joab, their chief problem was wanting to be chief! It was their pride that fueled their agenda! The same is true of brethren today who have an agenda. They become self-inflated with the importance of their agenda and how important they are to carrying out such an agenda. They know what is best and they know how it should best be done. If you don't believe it, just ask them!

### Conclusion

Instead of advancing our own personal agenda let us deny ourselves and pursue God's agenda for our lives. Let us take up the cross and follow Him daily (*Luke 9:23*). Let us make it our agenda to let our lights so shine before men that they may see our good works and glorify the Father in heaven (*Matt. 5:16*). May our only agenda be to fear God and keep His commandments (*Ecc. 12:13*). Let us make it our agenda to be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord (*1 Cor. 15:58*). May our only agenda be to work the work of the Lord (*1 Cor. 16:10*) and to be addicted to the ministry of the saints (*1 Cor. 16:15*). Above all, let

our main agenda be to love God with all of our hearts (*Matt. 22:37*), to love our neighbors as we love ourselves (*Matt. 22:39*) and to let all that we do be done in love (*1 Cor. 16:14*)!

### The Church Of Christ

Wade Webster

During His ministry upon the earth, Jesus promised to build His church (*Matthew 16:18*). Although He was rejected and crucified, His promise did not fail. God's promises never do (*2 Peter 3:9; Numbers 23:19*). In the second chapter of Acts, we find the church in existence on the earth just as Jesus had promised (*Acts 2:47*). His death was not an unforeseen occurrence, but rather a part of the "determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" (*Acts 2:23; Isaiah 53; Revelation 13:8*). His death facilitated, rather than frustrated, God's eternal plan (*Ephesians 3:10-11*). It was through the shedding of His blood at Calvary that the church was purchased (*Acts 20:28; Ephesians. 5:25*).

The difficulty that faces man today is not whether the church of Christ exists, but rather how to find it among the hundreds of man-made churches that dot the religious landscape. For sure, the search can be frustrating. In fact, some have given up on ever finding the church, while others have simply settled for something less than the church recorded in the New Testament. While identifying the church among so many counterfeits may be difficult, it is not impossible. God has given man a blueprint by which he can prove that which is good and reject that which is bad (*1 Thessalonians 5:21; 2 Peter 1:3*).

From the beginning, the followers of Christ have been identified by their steadfast adherence to the commands of Christ. To some Jews that believed on Him, Jesus declared, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed" (*John 8:31*). In like manner, concerning the church, Luke recorded, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (*Acts 2:42*). How do you identify the true church in the midst of so many churches today? You find it in the same way that men and women found it in the first century. You find it by finding those who are abiding in the doctrine of Christ in all aspects of their work and worship (*2 John 9-11*). We humbly ask for you to put us to the test (*1 Thessalonians 5:21*). We sincerely invite you to "come and see" if we are that church (*Isaiah 2:2-3; John 1:39, 46; 4:29*).

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