

UNSUNG HEROES

Part 1

“MICAIAH: An Unpopular Israeli Prophet” 2 Chronicles 18

ENGAGING the Audience

In general, we love underdogs. We cheer for the “little” guy. We pull for the person or team who has the odds stacked against them.

Some of our favorite movies are inspirational stories about underdogs - *Rocky*, *A Beautiful Mind*, *The Pursuit of Happyness*, *The Sound of Music*, *Rudy*, and most recently *Slumdog Millionaire*.

Some of the greatest sporting feats of all-time were amazing victories by underdogs like...

- The 1980 USA Olympic Hockey Team that did the unthinkable by beating hockey superpowers like the Soviet Union and Finland.
- The 1983 NC State Wolfpack who pulled off one the greatest upsets of all-time when they beat the “Phi Slamma Jamma” Houston Cougars to win the NCAA national championship in men’s basketball.
- James “Buster” Douglas, a 42:1 underdog, shocking the boxing world by beating Mike Tyson for the heavyweight boxing title in 1990.
- And most recently, “Mind that Bird” winning the Kentucky Derby as the longest-odds horse in the last 85 years.

We love real life stories of people who, down-and-out at one time, accomplished extraordinary things. People like...

- Dr. Ben Carson, a world-renown pediatric neurosurgeon at John Hopkins University who at one time was a struggling student at the bottom on his class.
- Victor Frankl, a famous psychiatrist and author who survived Nazi concentration camps.
- Ludwig Van Beethoven overcame deafness as an adult to become one of the greatest pianists and composers of all-time.

To say that the deck was stacked against these people is an understatement. They were largely unknown to popular culture. They were given little, if any chance, to succeed or win. And...many of them were mocked, laughed at, and oftentimes given-up on.

In a nutshell, each of these stories, teams, and people faced overwhelming odds. Each, in one-way or another, had a Goliath standing in their way and they pulled off a modern-day “David.”

Making the CONNECTION

Last week, we defined a HERO as “a person who, in the face of danger and adversity or from a position of weakness, displays courage and the will for self-sacrifice for some greater good.”

This morning, our Unsung Hero definitely meets the criteria of a hero. He faced considerable danger and adversity as a relatively unknown prophet in Israel. On top of that, as we will see from the text, he faced overwhelming odds.

Now, when it comes to biblical prophets that we're familiar with and admire, we immediately think of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, and Jonah (at least that's who I think of). These prophets had entire books of the Bible named after them. These guys got a lot of "ink" from God.

Yet, there were many other faithful prophets in the days of Israel that didn't get the ink these guys did. There were many unsung prophets in the life of Israel that faithfully served God and proclaimed His message without ever receiving the notoriety and fame that the Major & Minor Prophets of the Bible received.

Today's hero was an obscure prophet who was definitely an underdog in his culture's eyes.

Exploring the SCRIPTURE

In 2 Chronicles 18, we find the story of a relatively unknown prophet named Micaiah who is without question an UNSUNG HERO. [Read 2 Chronicles 18]

"Discovering the Context"

Although the story mentions only two kings - Ahab and Jehoshaphat - there's a third king that's a major player to this story.

In 1 Kings 20, we learn about Ben-hadad, king of Syria, who was an enemy of Israel. Ben-hadad was a foreign tyrant who one day, out of the clear blue, decided he wanted all of Ahab's gold and silver, as well as his "best wives and children." (1 Kings 20:3) What arrogance!

Believe it or not, out of fear, Ahab initially complied with Ben-hadad's request. But, after speaking with the elders of Israel, Ahab was instructed "not to consent" to Ben-hadad's arrogant demands. When Ahab's messengers told Ben-hadad that Ahab was not in compliance, Ben-hadad saddled up his massive army and planned an attack against Ahab and Israel.

Even though Ahab was an evil king, God still loved His people. Thus, God intervened on behalf of Israel by slaughtering the Syrians. In fact, the story tells us that in one day, the much smaller Israeli army slaughtered 100,000 Syrian soldiers. When all was said and done, Ben-hadad was captured and begged Ahab to spare his life. As Ben-hadad begged for his life, he promised Ahab that he would return to Israel the cities that his father had unfairly taken from Israel.

Now, this is where our story picks up. There is a good possibility that Ramoth-gilead was one of the cities that Ben-hadad's father had taken from Israel. For whatever reason, Ramoth-gilead had not been returned to Israel the way Ben-hadad had promised. Thus, Ahab decides that he's going to take matters into his own hands by taking it back. But, in order to pull it off, Ahab needed the mighty army and rich supplies of Judah and King Jehoshaphat.

Jehoshaphat agrees, albeit foolishly, to partner with Ahab. However, being the godly king that he was (17:3, 6), Jehoshaphat demanded that they seek the council of a godly prophet before they went into battle. Jehoshaphat didn't trust the pseudo prophets of Ahab's court and wanted to know whether God had blessed the plan. It was important to Jehoshaphat to know whether God was going to be with them or against them in battle.

That's where Micaiah comes in to play. He was the only prophet left in Israel who had the calling and integrity to speak the Word of God. Ahab hated Micaiah because Micaiah always spoke the truth - a message that always rebuked and convicted Ahab of his wicked ways.

“Micaiah’s Challenge”

Do you know what Micaiah is? Micaiah is a reminder that there’s always someone who’s got it worse than you do.

If you think your life is bad, consider Micaiah’s plight. Micaiah encountered intense peer pressure, discouraging odds (400:1), coercion, public humiliation, and false imprisonment. He wasn’t popular, he didn’t hang with the cool prophets, and the king of Israel equated him with “evil.” Micaiah’s job description was simple: proclaim God’s message to a rogue king and a rebellious nation.

Do you know what the Bible says about King Ahab?

“Ahab did more to provoke the Lord, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him.” 1 Kings 16:33

“There was none who sold himself to do what was evil in the sight of the Lord like Ahab, whom Jezebel his wife incited. He acted very abominably in going after idols...” 1 Kings 21:25

The Bible says that Micaiah worked for an evil and abominable whoremonger who provoked God to anger more than any other king in the history of Israel. How would like God to describe you as a person who whored himself/herself to evil? Well...that’s exactly how God described Ahab.

The odds are that men who sound and act a lot like Ahab employ some of you. You may work for and with men and women or go to school with peers who are selling themselves to evil? You may operate in environments - whether work or school - where people are provoking God to anger?

Guess what? You can be a godly hero just like Micaiah!

Micaiah woke up every day of his adult life knowing that virtually everyone in his sphere of influence despised him for what he stood for and whom he ultimately served. Micaiah was the odd-man-out. His peers ostracized him. He was forced to stand alone in a culture of sin, hedonism, and defiant compromise.

The odds are that some of you are despised in your workplace and your schools for what you stand for and whom you ultimately serve. Maybe you feel like the odd-man-out? Maybe your coworkers and fellow students have ostracized you? Maybe you’re feeling lonely because you are standing all alone in a culture of sin, hedonism, and defiant compromise?

Guess what? You can be a godly hero just like Micaiah!

Micaiah was pressured to compromise God’s message of truth. Every one of his prophetic peers - all four hundred of them - had joined the ranks of the dark side and compromised their calling as a true prophet of Israel. His peers stood in unison while Micaiah remained the lone dissenter. His peers coerced him to conceal the truth. His peers repeatedly tempted him to take the easy route and tickle Ahab’s ears by telling the king what he wanted to hear. And...when Micaiah refused, he was publicly mocked and falsely imprisoned.

The odds are that some of you are feeling intense pressure from your boss, coworkers, or peers to compromise God’s standards. Maybe you’re being coerced to misrepresent the truth? Maybe you’re being threatened to conceal the truth? Maybe you’re being mocked at work or school? Maybe your coworkers or schoolmates are attributing your faith as ignorant, debased, or “evil”?

Guess what? You can be a godly hero just like Micaiah!

“Identifying the Keys to Micaiah’s Heroism”

One of my favorite verses in the entire Bible is found in the story of Micaiah.

As this obscure prophet encountered intense peer pressure, discouraging odds, coercion, public humiliation, and false imprisonment, he looked his peers and the evil Ahab square in the face and said...

“As the Lord lives, what my God says, that I will speak.”

WOW! What a verse! Isn’t that just an awesome statement?

Micaiah refused to say anything that was not directly from God. Can you imagine how different our lives would be if we held the same bold conviction in our daily living?

How did Micaiah possess the courage and boldness to say such a thing in the crucible of peer pressure and discouraging odds? How did Micaiah possess such an unwavering commitment to the truthfulness of God’s Word? How did Micaiah display such heroism?

First, and most importantly, **Micaiah stood in awe of God - not men!**

Micaiah refused to be enamored by the fame, power, influence, and wealth of king Ahab. In Ecclesiastes 12:13-14, God says through king Solomon...

“The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.”

William Gurnall, in his Christian classic *Christian in Complete Armour*, said...

“We fear God so little because we fear man so much.”

This surely wasn’t the case for Micaiah. Micaiah refused to stand in awe of Ahab and his peers. Instead, Micaiah stood in reverential awe of the holy God - even if it meant that he stood alone. Even if it meant be ostracized, publicly humiliated, and falsely imprisoned.

Being a godly hero demands that you stand in awe of God - not men. Being a godly hero demands that you stand in awe of God’s fame, God’s power, God’s riches, and God’s glory - not the popularity, power, and wealth, and glory of men.

Would like to be a godly hero for the glory of God? **STAND IN AWE OF GOD!**

Second, **Micaiah knew God and His Word!**

The only way that Micaiah could take such a bold stand was if he had intimate knowledge of God and His voice. The Psalmist says...

“How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way. Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” (Psalm 119:103-105)

God's presence and God's Word must be sweeter to you than anything else in your life. God's Word must be your navigational system. God's Word must be your sole and final rule of authority for living. It is through God's Word that we hear His voice, know His will, and receive the courage and boldness to be obedient in the face of intense peer pressure and discouraging odds.

Would you like to be a hero for the glory of God? **KNOW GOD & HIS WORD!**

Third, because he stood in awe of God and possessed intimate knowledge of His voice, **Micaiah boldly spoke the truth!**

Although he knew the truth would be unpopular and offensive, Micaiah nonetheless spoke the truth with incredible boldness. As Christians, we are commanded by God to boldly speak the Truth. What is the truth? The truth is the Gospel. The truth is the Bible - the voice of God. The truth is Jesus Christ. The truth is God's way - a way that rejects sin and embraces righteousness.

The Bible says...

"Faithful are the wounds of a friend..." Proverbs 27:6

"Speak the truth to one another; render in your gates judgments that are true and make for peace." Zechariah 8:16

"Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another." Ephesians 4:25

Why are so many Christians afraid to speak the truth? After all, the Bible says...

"If God is for us, who can be against us." Romans 8:31

Well, for one thing, many Christians don't know the truth. Many Christians don't spend enough time with God and His Word to know the truth. For Micaiah to say what he said, when he said it, is overwhelming evidence that he had spent time listening to God's voice.

For another thing, speaking God's truth isn't popular. Speaking God's truth is not going to gain you a large fan club. It's not going to win you a popularity contest at work or school. Why? God's truth oftentimes is confrontational. God's truth confronts people and their lifestyle of sin - and people don't like to be confronted about sin. Just ask king Ahab.

That leads to a third reason we don't speak truth - the vast majority of people loathe confrontation. Confrontation is uncomfortable. It can be very painful. It can result in rejection - and none of us like to be rejected. So, what do we often do? We conceal the truth.

Finally, speaking the truth is usually a lonely path. Throughout the Bible, most of God's spokesman had few friends - and lots of enemies. These men walked a humble and lonely path for much of their lives and ministry. Many of them spoke truth staring huge numbers of opposition square in the face. They were mocked. They were vilified. They were falsely accused. The very people they loved and served rejected them. Doesn't sound very appealing, does it?

The vast majority of us don't like standing alone. We have a strong aversion to loneliness. We want everyone to like us. It tears our guts out when we know people don't like us. We hate rejection. So, what do we do? We conceal the truth - the very truth that has the power to set people free.

In the end, Micaiah knew the truth and spoke the truth knowing that it was unpopular, confrontational, and would produce loneliness. He refused to conceal God's truth.

Would you like to be a hero for the glory of God? **SPEAK THE TRUTH!**

Casting VISION

Micaiah is definitely an **UNSUNG HERO!** The odds are that most of you had never heard of Micaiah until today.

One chapter! That's all the ink Micaiah got. That's not much considering the attention prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel received. But...what a powerful chapter it is.

If God only gave you one chapter in the Bible, would you be presented as a godly hero? Would you be presented as a man or woman who stood in awe of God rather than people? Would you be presented as a man or woman who intimately knew God and His Word? Would you be presented as a man or woman who speaks the Truth at all times - no matter what the cost?

Micaiah was!

Be a hero for the glory of God and the renown of His great name!

- Stand in awe of God - not men.
- Take time to intimately know God and His Word.
- Speak the Truth at all times to all people - no matter how unpopular it may be.

Do these things and you'll be hero in the eyes of the only person that truly counts - Jesus Christ!

