

Heroes of Old #3 – Benaiah

We are continuing on with our series “Heroes of Old.” And we are looking at heroes in the Old Testament that faced overwhelming odds and **overcame fear** and accomplished great things.

There are over 2,000 things that people are fearful about. One of the greatest fears is called **glossophobia** – the fear of speaking in public. How many of you would say that is one of your fears? Okay, would you stand up where you are and tell us how you feel about that? 😊

There is a fear called **ablutophobia** and it’s the fear of washing or bathing and if you have that fear you don’t have to raise your hand, we already know.

We are only born with two fears, **The fear of falling and the fear of loud noises**. That means all other fears we have are learned. And if we can learn them, we can unlearn them. They can be broken by the power of Christ.

Our key verse for this series is 2 Timothy 1:7, “*For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.*” God has not given us a spirit of fear, yet many people don’t live anywhere close to their potential **because** of fear.

Today we are going to look at a guy named Benaiah. Not many people know who Benaiah is.

2 Samuel 23:20-21, “*Benaiah was a valiant fighter who performed great exploits. He struck down two of Moab's best men. He also went down into a pit on a snowy day and killed a lion. And he struck down a huge Egyptian. Although the Egyptian had a spear in his hand, Benaiah went against him with a club. He snatched the spear from the Egyptian's hand and killed him with his own spear.*”

He was one bad dude! He was referred to as one of King David’s mighty men. The cream of the crop, the bravest of the brave. A general in the Israeli army in charge of 24,000 troops. He was the captain of King David’s body guard.

What did he do to earn all this responsibility? For one thing he was absolutely fearless. Did you notice that the passage in 2 Samuel said that he went down into a pit on a snowy day and killed a lion?

That was something else; he corners a lion in a pit in the snow and killed it. I don’t know why he did this, maybe the lion was killing livestock or something or maybe he just didn’t like cats.

Once when I was a kid we had a canary and it was a nice day so mom put its cage out on the back porch. I went out there and there was an alley cat trying to get it. I went to slap it away when it turned on me with claws flying.

Hard to imagine taking on a lion with their huge claws a flying and with a single bite that lion could crush his skull.

This guy went toe-to-toe with a lion and won. Normal people don't do that. Normal people don't face their fears. Normal people don't chase lions but then again, "normal people" often die with many **regrets**. Maybe we don't want to be normal.

Normal people don't chase lions. I want to face those fears that are keeping me from becoming what God created me to be. And the only way we will become all that God wants us to be, is by the power of Christ, we overcome those fears that paralyze us from taking the faith risks that God wants to honor.

The question I have for you today is a very important one, **what lion do you need to conquer?** Metaphorically speaking what is the fear that God wants to help you overcome so that you can experience His greatness?

What lion do you need to conquer? It could be something simple, like that you don't really trust God so you have never **tithed**. And maybe today is the day you say, *"Lord, I believe that 90% with Your blessing is more than a 100% without it."*

Maybe for you, it is that you need to **tell one of your relatives** about Jesus, you love your relative but you are afraid to do it. But one day, one of the greatest regrets of your life might be that you never told them.

Maybe you are a **student out of a school** and instead of wasting your summer you know there is something better you can do with your time.

Maybe you have been stuck in a job for a long time that you're not really passionate about and you're not using the gifts that God has given you, you are earning a check but you are not making a difference. But you don't make a move because you're afraid of what might happen.

So you end up spending 20 or 30 years doing something that you don't like and that doesn't make a difference. **What lion do you need to chase?** Maybe there is a book inside of you that feel called to write, but you are afraid. *"What if I can't find a publisher, what if no one reads it?" What if it stinks?"* And so you don't do it. And you will never know.

Maybe you've been coming to church, you show up but you're not using your gifts, and you know there are things you could do. But the gifts God has given you are going unused and wasted because you won't take that step of faith.

What could it be? I don't know. Maybe it's something like taking care of the grounds or leading a short term mission or hosting a Growth Group, a home Bible study. You need to get out of your comfort zone and obey the voice of God.

Maybe you need to repair a relationship that's been broken but you are afraid to try because you might be rejected again. But if you don't try – nothing is going to happen. **What lions do you need to chase?** You need to conquer them so God can continue His work. What lions do you need to face?

Now God may put you in a pit with a lion on a snowy day because as believers we all should be lion chasers. We should not be satisfied with the status quo. As believers Jesus is taking us places. He's stretching us.

He's calling us to do things we cannot do on our own. So we must conquer our fears. Our spirituality and faith grows when we use our faith and we see God be faithful. What lions do you need to chase?

When we study the heroes of old we learn two things about being a lion chaser:

1. Lion chasers know that the bigger their God is, the smaller the lions become. The bigger their God, the smaller the lion. The problem is we look at the lions instead of looking at God. When you pay all your attention to the lion, the lion looks big. When you look to God, the lions look small.

What is the biggest problem when you face a difficulty that looks insurmountable? Usually, the biggest problem is **your God is too small.** You are looking at the lion instead of our big God. And when you look at our big God the lion become small.

Another hero of old, **Daniel** understood this principle. The king that Daniel served under, King Darius was tricked into issuing a decree that anyone who prays to any god other than King Darius will be thrown into the lion's den.

King Darius thought very highly of **Daniel** and was about to put him in charge of the entire kingdom, the king's other counselors were jealous and looked for a way to accuse Daniel of wrong doing but Daniel was so ethical that they couldn't find anything so they tricked the king into issuing a decree that they knew Daniel would not keep.

The law was that once the king issued a decree it could not be cancelled. And as hard as king Darius tried, he could find no way around the law and finally had to agree to have Daniel thrown into the lion's den. And the king told Daniel *"May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!"*

So Daniel and the king got to see firsthand who is bigger, God or the lion. The king was so worried about Daniel that he couldn't sleep. Daniel 6:19-23, *"At the first light of dawn, the king hurried to the lions' den and he called to Daniel in an anguished voice, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God been able to rescue you from the lions?" Daniel answered, "O king, live forever! My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. The king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den. And when Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God." Why was he safe? "Because he trusted in his God."*

Notice the king asked about Daniel's God and Daniel said, **"My God"** has saved me." There was a difference between Daniel's God and the king's god. The king knew his own god couldn't save Daniel.

And like the king there are a lot of people who only know about God, He is someone else's God. Then, like Daniel, there are those who know Him personally and can say, *"He is my God."*

Let me tell you about my God. My God is overwhelming in His mighty power. He is the alpha and the omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. There is no one like my God.

My God is majestic in holiness, awesome in glory. He is infinite. He is eternal. He is the King of kings, and the Lord of lords. There is no one like my God.

So, who is He to you? When you face some kind of lion, **how big is your God and how little is your lion?** The lion may look big but God will be what you need to overcome the lion.

If you have an addiction and you don't feel like you can beat it, look past the addiction and look to God and say, "My God is my **deliverer**." When you are weak, say, "My God is my **strength**." When you don't know what to do, say, "My God is my **guide**." When you are hurting, "My God is my **comforter**." When you're alone, "My God is my **friend**."

If your family abandons you, my God sticks closer than a brother. He is my strength, my shield, my redeemer. He is everything I need. Who is He to you?

When you know Him personally He becomes bigger and the lion becomes smaller. You can face the fear, he will strengthen you and you will overcome it.

2. Lion chasers understand that playing it safe is risky. Hebrews 11:6, “*And without faith it is impossible to please God”*

Saying we have faith is not enough; we have to show it by our actions. Without faith it is impossible to please God. **There is no such thing as a risk-free faith.**

Most people say: “*I would like to make more money and have a stable job and that everyone in my family is safe.*” We want to **increase security** and **decrease risk**.

And yet faith often causes us to do the opposite. Think about Benaiah, if he had not chased a lion he would have increased his security and decreased his risk. But instead he increased his risk and decreased his security by chasing the lion.

But if he had not chased the lion, he would never have killed it. The greatest victories are on the **other** side of faith. 18 years ago I stepped out of a well-paying job with excellent benefits into ministry.

I took a job with a church for \$20,000 a year less money and absolutely no benefits. And from the world’s point of view that was unnatural and very foolish. But God was building my faith. 10 years later, the Lord had blessed and I was getting decent pay and benefits.

Then I was asked to come to Baxter, but at the time Baxter didn’t have the money to pay me. Now that is a pretty big lion to face. I was 62 years old, should I leave the security of working for a large church and come to a church that couldn’t afford to pay me and for me to basically start over 3 years before most people retire.

But I had already been to the pit; I had already seen the lion and had survived so I knew we serve a great God. It had happened two years before I came over to Baxter. I had been asked to speak at a **Sikh festival in Punjab** and to baptize the head guru and his wife while I was there.

There would be 10,000 of his followers at the festival. And the leaders of his sect were dead set against him converting to Christianity. I was certain that I would be killed by his followers before I got out of the water.

But for some reason I was at peace with it. The Lord had let me live 60 years which was longer than a lot of people live. Before I left I asked the elders of the church who agreed to continue to pay Barbara my wages for a year if I didn’t come back.

I got Missionary's insurance for the first time and I went to an **intercessory prayer** group here in town to have them pray over me. Which they did, and after the prayer time one told me that I was going to be safe and as a matter of fact he said he saw that I was going to be in a place with **Roman type columns**.

One of the other intercessors told me that she saw that I was not only going to be safe but would be **treated like a prince**. Now keep in mind I'm not from a Pentecostal type background and I didn't know what to think about what they told me. This was all far out stuff for me.

Well, obviously, I didn't get killed and when they picked me up at the railroad terminal in **Ludiana, Punjab** they took me to a three star hotel where I was put in an executive suite with **Roman columns**.

When I was taken to the temple I was **treated like royalty** and was assigned bodyguards to protect me. The bodyguards all had badges with lions on them and they would part the crowds to take us to the stage. I have been to the pit, I have seen the lion and had survived – I know we serve a mighty God.

And that is the way it works, with God's help you slay one lion and **the next one doesn't seem so big** and so I was willing to walk away from the money and the security I had and come to Baxter.

But look how large our God is, the elders of the large church not only agreed to release me to come over but even though there was no connection between the two churches they agreed to cover **half of my salary** for one year. Sink or swim. The church either grew enough in one year to pay me or I was sunk.

There was **no guarantee** that there would still be a paycheck after one year. So what should I have done? That step of faith was rewarded by God. Now eight years later look at what God has done.

And it is scary to think about what would have happened if I had played it safe and not chased the lion. And I say this humbly, because **I know it is not about me**. But there are people and whole families that now know the Lord and I thank Him daily how He has blessed this church and allowed me to experience this blessing.

What would happen if you don't chase the lion? Who is it that God wants you to reach? What would be different if you conquered that fear by faith and let God work through you? Lion chasers know that **playing it safe is risky**.

Benaiah was scared. You cannot follow a lion into a pit and not be scared. But with the Lord's help he overcame his fear. There is a lion out there and you are scared. **So what?** Feel the fear and attack anyway. Take that step of faith.

You know something that scares me? Teaching God's Word. It doesn't bother me to be up in front of people, I don't have a fear of public speaking, not at all, but teaching God's Word? That is a very sobering thing.

James 3:1, *"Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly."* What if I mess it up and teach something that is not true?

I tell you right now, I'm not spiritual enough, not learned enough, not a good enough person to presume to be a teacher. Only through God's mercy am I here doing this. And it is not about me, it's about His power, His strength, His Word, His truth. It is all about Him.

You were not created to be average, you were created by an extraordinary God to make an impact on this world but **Satan is taking some of you out of it** because of fear. God has not given you a spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

Feel the fear and do it anyway, **chase the lion**. Believe God, believe God, then take the step. Whatever that step is for you. Make the phone call, follow the leading God has given you, get the help you need to get free of your addiction.

Whatever it is, take the step. 2 Corinthians 5:7, *"We live by faith, not by sight..."* Lion chasers understand, the bigger their God, the smaller the lions become, and it is risky to live safely. We are going to follow God by faith.

There are some of you that you recognize there is a lion in your life. There is a fear, and it is paralyzing you. You know what it is. And today you decide to face it. You are going to follow that lion into the pit and do away with him once and for all.

And maybe it will be hard. Benaiah not only fought the lion in a pit, it was a snowy pit so it would be slippery, more so for him than the lion, it not only was scary, it was hard. But he knew he needed to do it, and he needed to do it now.

Think about this, the lion was in the pit, he was sort of contained, Benaiah could have stood at the top and thrown rocks at it or something. He didn't have to go down into the pit. But he knew he needed to face the lion before it had a chance to escape and attack him or a loved one.

Maybe there is a lion God wants you to face today. He doesn't want you to stand back and throw rocks at it, He wants you to kill it once and for all.

Today are you going to take that step? Whatever it is for you, commit today to take the step of faith, and watch when God meets you and you slay that lion together.

If you recognize there's a fear, a lion, it's time to chase it, to conquer it. It's time to run it down and with God's power; you are going to defeat it.

Prayer *"Father, I thank You for those who say, "I don't want to be comfortable. I don't want to live a meaningless life, but I pray that you would stir us up to the point of complete faith, where we cannot stay where we are, but we would take the step of faith. Whatever it is, God, help us to be obedient to You. God, we thank You that You are conquering fear, that these are irrational, that you are greater than any fear. And we thank You that if fears can be learned, they can be unlearned; better yet, they can be broken. Lord, may we live by faith and not by sight. May we have divine faith in You and not an ungodly fear of the wrong things. Lord, set us free, and I pray, Lord that when we take those steps of faith that You will meet us and reveal Yourself, that You will confirm our faith, and Lord, that our faith will grow even greater, because You are a good God and You are always faithful.*

And this is the way it works, with God's help you slay one lion and then the next one doesn't seem so big.