

God's Iron Heart

In **2 Thess. 1:10** Paul teaches us something about the Lord's return. In the verses before this he shows that Christ's return will be a time of great judgment and justice against all His enemies. That's important but it is not just about judgment. **F2** Here in verse 10 Paul shows us that His coming also has to do with a purpose He has for His own people. It says that He is coming to be glorified in the saints. The word "admired at" used in the KJV means "to be struck with admiration, astonishment, and wonder." The Amplified Bible puts it this way:

F3 "When He comes to be glorified in His saints [on that day He will be made more glorious in His consecrated people], and [He will] be marveled at and admired [in His glory reflected] in all who have believed [who have adhered to, trusted in, and relied on Him]..."

Paul is saying that the world is going to be struck with wonder at something. God has been secretly doing in His church through the ages that He is going to show the world. **F4a He is going to show the world who He is in a people. God is going to show off to the world what His grace can do and has done in a people and the wonder of it is going to shock the whole world.** He is coming to be glorified in the saints. The world will going to be awestruck at what grace has done in a people. **F4b** They are going to be struck with wonder at what God in His grace has done in the likes of you and I. **If what the saints had become was something achieved by their own efforts and strength, He would not be getting the glory here.** They would be, but here He is being glorified. We are by-product of His life and His work in us. What we have become is not the by-product of our effort for Him. We are his workmanship. He did the work!

This emphasis on the king's return with the involvement of His people is also seen in 2 Samuel chapter 19. King David has been in exile in the wilderness because of the rebellion of Absalom his son. Absalom has been overthrown but David is still in exile. He has not yet returned to His God given place on the throne of Israel. The king's return is bound up with His own people. He awaits an invitation from them. In this chapter something special happens. The invitation comes to David and he responds to it and while he is making his journey back to his throne a series of men go out to meet him, some to get right with him, others to welcome him and to usher him back to his throne among them. I want to focus on one of those men today, the man Barzillai. We find his story in **2 Samuel 17:27-29** and in **2 Samuel 19:31-40**.

We meet Barzillai in chapter 17, but chapter 19 tells us more about him as a man. He is 80 years old. His life is almost over. He is a man that feels his age. The Bible tells us that he was a very great man. The idea behind that description is that he was a wealthy man. I would like to stay with the word used in the King James Version. When we hear the Spirit calling someone a great man, it makes you wonder what does God call great! **What does a great man look like in God's eyes?** That's what I want to look at today. I see a connection here between this man and the first verse we looked at in 2 Thess. 1:10. **The king's return is associated with what we see here in this great man.** His greatness is hinted at in the meaning of his name as well. **F5a The name Barzillai means "son of iron, iron man, or iron hearted."** Associated with the king's return is this one who is iron hearted. **That sounds great, but what does that mean?** What does that look like? How we become "iron hearted?" **F5b God's idea of being iron hearted might be different from ours.** To be iron man sounds like we are the heroes, that God is making us the hot shots that spiritually save the day. That is wrong. We need to be very careful about that kind of idea. Even though Barzillai is recognized by God as iron hearted, the king's return is not about Barzillai's glory. It never will be. As we read earlier, the king is coming to be glorified in His saints. The world is going to see Jesus in us. It is about His glory. If there are any who are iron hearted guess who's glory it is. When we look at Barzillai, the thing that made him great, the thing that made him iron hearted was the Lord Himself. In the words of the New Testament we would say if there is any hope of glory, it is through this one thing. Christ in us! That is what we see in Barzillai! He's no spiritual giant we should all gloat over. His life is the revelation of what grace can do and has done in him. He is no iron man in himself. **He is a man who, like the bride in the Song of**

Solomon is completely and entirely crippled by the hand of God, and who now in that crippled state emerges from the wilderness by the strength of another. Jesus told Peter that when he was young he girded himself and went and did what he wanted, but when he is old another shall gird him and take him where he would not. That is greatness as far as God is concerned. That is what we see in Barzillai as he describes himself in chapter 19. Look David, I am old. I am weak. I can't hear. I can't see, I can't taste. Does this look like a man strong in himself to you? No, but **God's idea of a great man is one who is broken who finds His strength in who Christ is in him.** According to the parable of the sower, the best kingdom soil is broken soil. We are complete in Him, and NEVER in ourselves. **F6a** Barzillai is a paradox. Here is a weak man who embodies a strength that is not his own. There is something more to this man than meets the eye. It is the mystery of who Christ is in a people. The "son of iron" is not us, but Christ in us. With that in mind, let's see how the Bible describes Christ in us through this man's life:

F7 1. God's Iron heart is identified with the King in his weakness. 2 Samuel 17:27-29. We see this man appearing in David's life at a very bleak point. Things might be considered very depressing for David. Absalom has been wreaking havoc in the nation. The king does not appear very successful here. The king is in weakness and reproach. As a matter of fact, you take your life into your own hands to be his friend. These are some of David's darkest days. Despite all this, Barzillai suddenly shows up with all these provisions that will keep David and his men going. It is a terribly dark day for David and for the people of God, yet God uses it as the background to a wonderful story, the story of the king and his companions! What better way to show the beauty and wonder of friendship to the king than in this background of darkness and betrayal. In this kind of setting God is showing us what real friendship is all about. **God's iron heart is one who is identified with the king in his weakness.** These men are reaching out to God's appointed king who at that time is rejected and exiled in the wilderness with no apparent glory. Here is a company bearing the reproach of the cross. The king and his army look like a failure to most. If he is truly the appointed king, what's he doing out there! **Little does the world know the surpassing treasure that is there in that place of obscurity and reproach.** There is God's appointed king and a remnant who are loyal to him. Though the world has no idea of the value of this company, Barzillai does and reaches out to them. He doesn't wait for the day when the king looks a little more successful. The church in the wilderness has a great value. It is not a visible one. Its value is not defined by anything in the outward. The church's value is defined by one thing, by its union with the God's appointed king. God's iron heart is not offended by the lowliness of David. He is not offended by the cross of Christ. The cross is a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles. Barzillai identifies with the Lord when there's not anything to take notice of. He goes outside the camp bearing the king's reproach. **Hebrews 13:12,13** It could cost him his life, but he gives of himself to the king anyway. Next we see that...

F8 2. God's Iron heart seeks the king's glory not his own. Barzillai rejects the king's reward. That is shocking to us. There is nothing higher than being called daily to sit with the king at his table. There is no higher privilege or honor and yet Barzillai refuses this for himself. What this shows us about him is that his heart was not focused on what the king could do for him, it was on what he could do for the king. The king promised to look after this man. He had promised to feed him and to provide for him, but look at his response to the king's offer in **vs. 34,35. F9a** He was not out for what he could get from the king. There was nothing that the king could do for him. He was an old man. He wasn't there to see what he could get out of the king. He was there to do something for the king. **F9b He was there to accompany the king. He was there that the king might have his place on the throne again.** The thing that made Barzillai tick was asking what can I do for the cause of the Lord's anointed? What can I do for the king? He wasn't there asking what can the Lord's anointed do for me!

It is possible to be joined to the cause of God for what we can get out of it, and for how important it makes us look and feel. We often go to church for what we can get out of it. Church has become a place for the excitement of the flesh. It is all geared to make people happy. I go there because it makes me feel good. Barzillai was there for what he could put into the work of the Lord, not for what he could get out of

it. The meaningful thing for him was to minister to the appointed king and to be there in what we might say is one of the greatest events of the king's life, his repossession of the inheritance the Father has promised Him. That meant more to him than anything else. **F10 His joy was in seeing the work of God going on and seeing the king and the cause of the kingdom of God advancing in the earth.** Here is a man who loves the king. He supported his cause and he stayed with the king right through one of his most precious times. Can you imagine singling out one of the most important things that could ever happen to King Jesus and then seeing that you are there with Him in it? That is what this iron heart did.

F11 3. God's Iron heart has a heart for the younger generation. Vs. 36-40. The king's return is a time of reward and here David seeks to return the kindness that Barzillai showed him while he was in exile. David says to him "come over with me and I will provide for you with me in Jerusalem." David offers to Barzillai a place at his table just as he had offered to Mephibosheth. **There is nothing greater than to sit with the king at his table** but Barzillai refuses the king's reward. **Vs. 34.** He refuses on the basis of his age. He is unable to enjoy them for himself. **INSTEAD HE MOVES IN THE SACRIFICIAL LOVE OF GOD!** He commends to David a young man, that the king might do to this young man whatever he was going to do for Barzillai.

F13 This iron heart gives away what he has gained for himself to another. He makes his supplication to king David. God's iron hearted man is longing for the younger generation. He is concerned for the future of the kingdom of God, that if it is going to have a future, the younger generation has to be touched by God as well. Barzillai requests that all he has done in walking with the king and pressing on into him, that the younger generation would be affected by it as well, that somehow the Lord would take what he has labored for and **let the younger generation benefit by it too!** "Lord, let what we have done in our day be carried on by them as well!" **This iron heart intercedes for this younger crowd who are getting ready to face life.** In our day we have a name for them. **Lord we ask you for the Millennials, that generation that has been so severely targeted by the enemy!** Lord, let them be touched with what you have touched us with! Lord make this young confused generation Your own! Don't leave them to themselves. **Lord what You have done in us and for us, repeat that in them as well!** **Lord let this younger generation experience You as we have!** Let them know closeness with You. Let them know fellowship with You at Your table! Lord let them know Your provision and presence in their own lives. Lord capture their hearts like You captured ours and work in such a way that their lives will be caught up with the cause of the king and His kingdom like ours is! **We can't ignore this younger generation!** **F14 We mustn't think that the most important thing that could happen today is a breakthrough that we get for ourselves!** Barzillai, the iron heart intercedes for the younger generation that they too would be caught up into this wonderful relationship with the king that he have come to know. **Lord let the reward you want to give us fall on them.** Lord let our lives find its full purpose in this fact, that how we have lived with You will affect the youth of our day that they might know the joy of nearness with the king that we have known. **Lord may they be swept up in the great cause of the anointed king that we have been swept up into.** Lord, don't let all this that You are doing end with us, but enable us to pass it down to this younger generation. intervene in their lives! **F15 This iron heart did not make his walk with God all about himself.** His cry was that what God was doing in him, would come down to his children, that they would walk with the king like he did. Lord this younger generation looks so hopeless, but they are not. May they know what it means to walk with the Lord's anointed!

In **vs. 40** we see David's answer to Barzillai's request. We are told that the king went on to Gilgal and Chimham went on with him. **David answered this iron heart's prayer.** We are told he accompanied the king. It says the king went on. What a beautiful sight! **The king is moving forward into all God has purposed for him and wonder of all wonders, Chimham went on with Him.** The younger generation that the enemy has marked for himself is seen here going on with the king. What an answer to prayer!

God is not out to make us all Iron hearts. We are not, nor ever will be God's iron heart. Out of his own lips Barzillai tells us how weak he is. Barzillai represents a people who have God's strength made

perfect in their weakness, who put on display before all the world the greatness of Christ in them. The purpose of God is about His glory in a people. **Christ in us is God's iron heart** and what we see here in this chapter is what it looks like when God's iron heart lives out His life in us.