

# CHAPTER 10

This chapter gives us an account of a war David has with the Ammonites and the Syrians their allies, with the occasion and success of it.

- I.** David sent a friendly embassy to Hanun king of the Ammonites (v. 1, 2).
- II.** He, upon a base surmise that it was ill intended, abused David's ambassadors (v. 3, 4).
- III.** David resenting it (v. 5), and the Ammonites prepared for war against him (v. 6).
- IV.** David carried the war into their country, sent against them. Joab and Abishai, who addressed themselves to the battle with a great deal of conduct and bravery (v. 7-12).
- V.** The Ammonites, and the Syrians their allies, were totally routed (v. 13, 14).
- VI.** The forces of the Syrians, which rallied again, were a second time defeated (v. 15-19). Thus did David advance his own reputation for gratitude, in returning kindness, and for justice, in repaying injuries.

## 2 SAMUEL 10:1-5

### HANUN'S USAGE OF DAVID'S SERVANTS

Here is,

- I.** The great respect David paid to his neighbour, the king of the Ammonites, v. 1, 2.
- 1.** The inducement to it was some kindness he had formerly received from Nahash the deceased king. He *showed kindness to me*, says David (v. 2), and therefore (having lately had satisfaction in showing kindness to Mephibosheth for his father's sake) he resolves to show kindness to his son, and to keep up a friendly correspondence with him. Thus the pleasure

of doing one kind and generous action should excite us to another. Nahash had been an enemy to Israel, a cruel enemy (<sup><BIB></sup>1 Samuel 11:2), and yet had shown kindness to David, perhaps only in contradiction to Saul, who was unkind to him: however, if David receives kindness, he is not nice in examining the grounds and principles of it, but resolves gratefully to return it. If a Pharisee give alms in pride, though God will not reward him, yet he that receives the alms ought to return thanks for it. God knows the heart, but we do not.

**2.** The particular instance of respect was sending an embassy to condole with him on his father's death, as is common among princes in alliance with each other: *David sent to comfort him*. Note, It is a comfort to children, when their parents are dead, to find that their parents' friends are theirs, and that they intend to keep up an acquaintance with them. It is a comfort to mourners to find that there are those who mourn with them, are sensible of their loss and share with them in it. It is a comfort to those who are honouring the memory of their deceased relations to find there are others who likewise honour it and who had a value for those whom they valued.

**II.** The great affront which Hanun the king of the Ammonites put upon David in his ambassadors.

**1.** He hearkened to the spiteful suggestions of his princes, who insinuated that David's ambassadors, under pretence of being comforters, were sent as spies, v. 3. False men are ready to think others as false as themselves; and those that bear ill-will to their neighbours are resolved not to believe that their neighbours bear any good-will to them. They would not thus have imagined that David dissembled but that they were conscious to themselves that they could have dissembled, to serve a turn. Unfounded suspicion argues a wicked mind. Bishop Patrick's note on this is that "there is nothing so well meant but it may be ill interpreted, and is wont to be so by men who love nobody but themselves." Men of the greatest honour and virtue must not think it strange if they be thus misrepresented. *Charity thinketh no evil*.

**2.** Entertaining this vile suggestion, he basely abused David's ambassadors, like a man of a sordid villainous spirit, that was fitter to rake a kennel than to wear a crown. If he had any reason to suspect that David's messengers came on a bad design, he would have done prudently enough to be upon the reserve with them, and to dismiss them as soon as he could; but it is

plain he only sought an occasion to put the utmost disgrace he could upon them, out of an antipathy to their king and their country. They were themselves men of honour, and much more so as they represented the prince that sent them; they and their reputation were under the special protection of the law of nations; they put a confidence in the Ammonites, and came among them unarmed; yet Hanun used them like rogues and vagabonds, and worse, *shaved off the one half of their beards, and cut off their garments in the midst*, to expose them to the contempt and ridicule of his servants, that they might make sport with them and that these men might seem vile.

**III.** David's tender concern for his servants that were thus abused. He sent to meet them, and to let them know how much he interested himself in their quarrel and how soon he would avenge it, and directed them to stay at Jericho, a private place, where they would not have occasion to come into company, till that half of their beards which was shaved off had grown to such a length that the other half might be decently cut to it, v. 5. The Jews wore their beards long, reckoning it an honour to appear aged and grave; and therefore it was not fit that persons of their rank and figure should appear at court unlike their neighbours. Change of raiment, it is likely, they had with them, to put on, instead of that which was cut off; but the loss of their beards would not be so soon repaired; yet in time these would grow again, and all would be well. Let us learn not to lay too much to heart unjust reproaches; after awhile they will wear off of themselves, and turn only to the shame of their authors, while the injured reputation in a little time grows again, as these beards did. God will *bring forth thy righteousness as the light*, therefore *wait patiently for him*, <sup><4876></sup>Psalm 37:6, 7.

Some have thought that David, in the indignity he received from the king of Ammon, was but well enough served for courting and complimenting that pagan prince, whom he knew to be an inveterate enemy to Israel, and might now remember how, when he would have put out the right eyes of the men of Jabesh-Gilead, he designed that, as he did this, for a *reproach upon all Israel*, <sup><49112></sup>1 Samuel 11:2. What better usage could he expect from such a spiteful family and people? Why should he covet the friendship of a people whom Israel must have so little to do with as that an Ammonite might not *enter into the congregation of the Lord, even to the tenth generation?* <sup><48213></sup>Deuteronomy 23:3.

## <3006>2 SAMUEL 10:6-14

### THE AMMONITES AND SYRIANS DEFEATED

Here we have,

**I.** The preparation which the Ammonites made for war, v. 6. They saw they had made themselves very odious to David and obnoxious to his just displeasure. This they might easily have foreseen when they abused his ambassadors, which was no other than a challenge to war, and a bold defiance of him. Yet, it seems, they had not considered how unable they were, with their thousands, to meet his; for now they found themselves an unequal match, and were forced to hire forces of other nations into their service. Thus sinners daringly provoke God, and expose themselves to his wrath, and never consider that he is *stronger than they*, <4612>1 Corinthians 10:22. The Ammonites gave the affront first, and they were the first that raised forces to justify it. Had they humbled themselves, and begged David's pardon, probably an honorary satisfaction might have atoned for the offence. But, when they were thus desperately resolved to stand by what they had done, they courted their own ruin.

**II.** The speedy descent which David's forces made upon them, v. 7. When David heard of their military preparations, he sent Joab with a great army to attack them, v. 7. Those that are at war with the Son of David not only give the provocation, but begin the war; for he *waits to be gracious*, but they *strengthen themselves against him*, and therefore, *if they turn not, he will whet his sword*, <4972>Psalm 7:12. God has forces to send against those that set his wrath at defiance (<2159>Isaiah 5:19), which will convince them, when it is too late, that *none ever hardened his heart against God and prospered*. It was David's prudence to carry the war into their country, and fight them at the entering in of the gate of their capital city, *Rabbah*, as some think, or *Medeba*, a city in their borders, before which they pitched to guard their coast, <1397>1 Chronicles 19:7. Such are the terrors and desolations of war that every good prince will, in love to his people, keep it as much as may be at a distance from them.



**III.** Preparations made on both sides for an engagement.

**1.** The enemy disposed themselves into two bodies, one of Ammonites, which, being their own, were posted at the gate of the city; the other of

Syrians, whom they had taken into their pay, and who were therefore posted at a distance in the field, to charge the forces of Israel in the flank or rear, while the Ammonites charged them in the front, v. 8.

**2.** Joab, like a wise general, was soon aware of the design, and accordingly divided his forces: the choicest men he took under his own command, to fight the Syrians, whom probably he knew to be the better soldiers, and, being hired men, better versed in the arts of war, v. 9. The rest of the forces he put under the command of Abishai his brother, to engage the Ammonites, v. 10. It should seem, Joab found the enemy so well prepared to receive them that his conduct and courage were never so tried as now.

**IV.** Joab's speech before the battle, v. 11, 12. It is not long, but pertinent, and brave.

**1.** He prudently concert the matter with Abishai his brother, that the dividing of the forces might not be the weakening of them, but that, which part soever was borne hard upon, the other should come in to its assistance. He supposes the worst, that one of them should be obliged to give back; and in that case, upon a signal given, the other should send a detachment to relieve it. Note, Mutual helpfulness is brotherly duty. If occasion be, *thou shalt help me, and I will help thee*. Christ's soldiers should thus strengthen one another's hands in their spiritual warfare. The strong must succour and help the weak. Those that through grace are conquerors over temptation must counsel, and comfort, and pray for, those that are tempted. *When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren,*  Luke 22:32. The members of the natural body help one another,  1 Corinthians 12:21.

**2.** He bravely encourages himself, and his brother, and the rest of the officers and soldiers, to do their utmost. Great dangers put an edge upon true courage. When Joab saw the front of the battle was against him, both before and behind, instead of giving orders to make an honourable retreat, he animated his men to charge so much more furiously: *Be of good courage and let us play the men*, not for pay and preferment, for honour and fame, but *for our people, and for the cities of our God*, for the public safety and welfare, in which the glory of God is so much interested. *God and our country* was the word. "Let us be valiant, from a principle of love to Israel, that are our people, descended from the same stock, for whom we are employed, and in whose peace we shall have peace; and from a

principle of love to God, for they are his cities that we are fighting in the defence of.” The relation which any person or thing stands in to God should endear it to us, and engage us to do our utmost in its service.

**3.** He piously leaves the issue with God: “When we have done our part, according to the duty of our place, *let the Lord do that which seemeth to him good.*” Let nothing be wanting in us, whatever the success be; let God's work be done by us, and then God's will be done concerning us. When we make conscience of doing our duty we may, with the greatest satisfaction, leave the event with God, not thinking that our valour binds him to prosper us, but that still he may do as he pleases, yet hoping for his salvation in his own way and time.

**V.** The victory Joab obtained over the confederate forces of Syria and Ammon, v. 13, 14. He provided for the worst, and put the case that the Syrians and Ammonites might prove too strong for him (v. 11), but he proved too strong for them both. We do not hinder our success by preparing for disappointment. The Syrians were first routed by Joab, and then the Ammonites by Abishai; the Ammonites seem not to have fought at all, but, upon the retreat of the Syrians, to have fled into the city. It is a temptation to soldiers to fly when they have a city at their backs to fly to. It is one thing when men may either fight or fly and another thing when they must either fight or die.

## 2 SAMUEL 10:15-19

### THE AMMONITES AND SYRIANS DEFEATED

Here is,

**1.** A new attempt of the Syrians to recover their lost honour and to check the progress of David's victorious arms. The forces that were lately dispersed rallied again, and *gathered themselves together*, v. 15. Even the baffled cause will make head as long as there is any life in it; the enemies of the Son of David do so, <sup><40234></sup>Matthew 22:34; <sup><66919></sup>Revelation 19:19. These, being conscious of their insufficiency, called in the aid of their allies and dependencies on the other side of *the river* (v. 16), and, being thus recruited, they hoped to make their part good against Israel, but *they knew*

*not the thoughts of the Lord, for he gathered them as sheaves into the floor;* see <sup><3041></sup>Micah 4:11-13.

**2.** The defeat of this attempt by the vigilance and valour of David, who, upon notice of their design, resolved not to stay till they attacked him, but went in person at the head of his army over Jordan (v. 17), and, in a pitched battle, routed the Syrians (v. 18), slew 7000 men, who belonged to 700 chariots, and 40,000 other soldiers, horse and foot, as appears by comparing <sup><3048></sup>1 Chronicles 19:18. Their general was killed in the battle, and David came home in triumph, no doubt.

**3.** The consequence of this victory over the Syrians.

**(1.)** David gained several tributaries, v. 19. *The kings*, or petty princes, that had been subject to Hadarezer, when they saw how powerful David was, very wisely *made peace with Israel*, whom they found they could not make war with, *and served them*, since they were able to give them protection. Thus the promise made to Abraham (<sup><0158></sup>Genesis 15:18), and repeated to Joshua (<sup><3004></sup>2 Samuel 1:4), that the borders of Israel should extend to the river Euphrates, was performed, at length.

**(2.)** The Ammonites lost their old allies: *The Syrians feared to help the children of Ammon*, not because they had an unrighteous cause (justifying a crime which was a breach of the law of nations), but because they found it was an unsuccessful cause. It is dangerous helping those that have God against them; for, when they fall, their helpers will fall with them.

Jesus Christ, the Son of David, sent his ambassadors, his apostles and ministers, after all his servants the prophets, to the Jewish church and nation; but they treated them shamefully, as Hanun did David's ambassadors, mocked them, abused them, slew them; and it was this that filled the measure of their iniquity, and brought upon them ruin without remedy (<sup><4235></sup>Matthew 21:35, 41, 22:7; compare <sup><4236></sup>2 Chronicles 26:16); for Christ takes the affronts and injuries done to his ministers as done to himself and will avenge them accordingly.