

CHAPTER 8

David having sought first the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof, settling the ark as soon as he was himself well settled, we are here told how all other things were added to him. Here is an account,

I. Of his conquests. He triumphed,

1. Over the Philistines (v. 1).
2. Over the Moabites (v. 2).
3. Over the king of Zobah (v. 3, 4).
4. Over the Syrians (v. 5-8, 13).
5. Over the Edomites (v. 14).

II. Of the presents that were brought him and the wealth he got from the nations he subdued, which he dedicated to God (v. 9-12).

III. Of his court, the administration of his government (v. 15), and his chief officers (v. 16-18). This gives us a general idea of the prosperity of David's reign.

~~<08E>~~ 2 SAMUEL 8:1-8

DAVID'S CONQUESTS

God had given David rest from all his enemies that opposed him and made head against him; and he having made a good use of that rest, has now commission given him to make war upon them, and to act offensively for the avenging of Israel's quarrels and the recovery of their rights; for as yet they were not in full possession of that country to which by the promise of God they were entitled.

I. He quite subdued the Philistines, v. 1. They had attacked him when they thought him weak (~~<05E>~~ 2 Samuel 5:17), and went by the worst then; but, when he found himself strong, he attacked them, and made himself master of their country. They had long been vexatious and oppressive to Israel. Saul got no ground against them; but David completed Israel's deliverance out of their hands, which Samson had begun long before, ~~<07E>~~ Judges 13:5. *Metheg-ammah* was *Gath* (the chief and royal city of the Philistines) and

the towns belonging to it, among which there was a constant garrison kept by the Philistines on the hill Ammah (^{<1024>}2 Samuel 2:24), which was *Metheg*, a *bridle* (so it signifies) or *curb* upon the people of Israel; this David took out of their hand and used it as a curb upon them. Thus, when the strong man is disarmed, the armour wherein he trusted is taken from him, and used against him, ^{<1012>}Luke 11:22. And after the long and frequent struggles which the saints have had with the powers of darkness, like Israel with the Philistines, the Son of David shall tread them all under their feet and make the saints more than conquerors.

II. He smote the Moabites, and made them tributaries to Israel, v. 2. He divided the country into three parts, two of which he destroyed, casting down the strong-holds, and putting all to the sword; the third part he spared, to till the ground and be servants to Israel. Dr. Lightfoot says, “He laid them on the ground and measured them with a cord, who should be slain and who should live;” and this is called *meting out the valley of Succoth*, ^{<1916>}Psalms 60:6. The Jews say he used this severity with the Moabites because they had slain his parents and brethren, whom he put under the protection of the king of Moab during his exile, ^{<1021>}1 Samuel 22:3, 4. He did it in justice, because they had been dangerous enemies to the Israel of God; and in policy, because, if left in their strength, they still would have been so. But observe, Though it was necessary that two-thirds should be cut off, yet the line that was to keep alive, though it was but one, is ordered to be a full line. Be sure to give that length enough; let the line of mercy be stretched to the utmost *in favorem vitae* — *so as to favour life*. Acts of indemnity must be construed so as to enlarge the favour. Now Balaam's prophecy was fulfilled, *A sceptre shall arise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab*, to the utmost of which the fatal line extended, ^{<10417>}Numbers 24:17. The Moabites continued tributaries to Israel till after the death of Ahab, ^{<1210>}2 Kings 3:4, 5. Then they rebelled and were never reduced.

III. He smote the Syrians or Aramites. Of them there were two distinct kingdoms, as we find them spoken of in the title of the 60th Psalm: *Aram Naharaim*, — *Syria of the rivers*, whose head city was Damascus (famed for its rivers, ^{<11512>}2 Kings 5:12), and *Aram Zobah*, which joined to it, but extended to Euphrates. These were the two northern crowns.

1. David began with the Syrians of Zobah, v. 3, 4. As he went to settle his border at the river Euphrates (for so far the land conveyed by the divine

grant to Abraham and his seed did extend, ^{<01518>}Genesis 15:18), the king of Zobah opposed him, being himself possessed of those countries which belonged to Israel; but David routed his forces, and took his chariots and horsemen. The horsemen are here said to be 700, but ^{<13804>}1 Chronicles 18:4 they are said to be 7000. If they divided their horse by ten in a company, as it is probable they did, the captains and companies were 700, but the horsemen were 7000. David houghed the horses, cut the sinews of their hams, and so lamed them, and made them unserviceable, at least in war, God having forbidden them to *multiply horses*, ^{<05176>}Deuteronomy 17:16. David reserved only 100 chariots out of 1000 for his own use: for he placed his strength not in chariots nor horses, but in the living God (^{<02017>}Psalm 20:7), and wrote it from his own observation that a *horse is a vain thing for safety*, ^{<03516>}Psalm 33:16, 17.

2. The Syrians of Damascus coming in to the relief of the king of Zobah fell with him. 22,000 were slain in the field, v. 5. So that it was easy for David to make himself master of the country, and garrison it for himself, v. 6. The enemies of God's church, that think to secure themselves, will prove, in the end, to ruin themselves, by their confederacies with each other. *Associate yourselves, and you shall be broken in pieces*, ^{<03189>}Isaiah 8:9.

IV. In all these wars,

1. David was protected: *The Lord preserved him whithersoever he went*. It seems, he went in person, and, in the cause of God and Israel, jeopardized his own life in the high places of the field; but God covered his head in the day of battle, which he often speaks of, in his psalms, to the glory of God.

2. He was enriched. He took the shields of gold which the servants of Hadadezer had in their custody (v. 7) and much brass from several cities of Syria (v. 8), which he was entitled to, not only *jure belli* — *by the uncontrollable right of the longest sword* (“Get it, and take it”); but by commission from heaven, and the ancient entail of these countries on the seed of Abraham.

~~1089~~ 2 SAMUEL 8:9-14

DAVID CONQUERS EDOM

Here is,

1. The court made to David by the king of Hamath, who, it seems was at this time at war with the king of Zobah. He hearing of David's success against his enemy, sent his own son ambassador to him (v. 9, 10), to congratulate him on his victory, to return him thanks for the favour he had done him in breaking the power of one he was in fear of, and to beg his friendship. Thus he not only secured but strengthened himself. And David lost nothing by taking this little prince under his protection, any more than the old Romans did by the like policy; for the wealth he had from the countries he conquered by way of spoil he had from this by way of present or gratuity: *Vessels of silver and gold*. Better get by composition than by compulsion.

2. The offering David made to God of the spoils of the nations and all the rich things that were brought him. He dedicated all to the Lord. Lord, v. 11, 12. This crowned all his victories, and made them far to out-shine Alexander's or Caesar's, that they sought their own glory, but he aimed at the glory of God. All the precious things he was master of were dedicated things, that is, they were designed for the building of the temple; and a good omen it was of kindness to the Gentiles in the fulness of time, and of the making of God's house a house of prayer for all people, that the temple was built of the spoils and presents of Gentile nations, in allusion to which we find *the kings of the earth bringing their glory and honour into the new Jerusalem*, ~~624~~ Revelation 21:24. Their gods of gold David burnt (~~1082~~ 2 Samuel 5:21), but their vessels of gold he dedicated. Thus in the conquest of a soul, by the grace of the Son of David, what stands in opposition to God must be destroyed, every lust mortified and crucified, but what may glorify him must be dedicated and the property of it altered. Even the merchandise and the hire must be *holiness to the Lord* (~~2218~~ Isaiah 23:18), the gain *consecrated to the Lord of the whole earth* (~~3043~~ Micah 4:13), and then it is truly our own and that most comfortably.

3. The reputation he got, in a particular manner, by his victory over the Syrians and their allies the Edomites, who acted in conjunction with them, as appears by comparing the title of the 60th Psalm, which was penned on

this occasion, with v. 13. *He got himself a name* for all that conduct and courage which are the praise of a great and distinguished general. Something extraordinary, it is likely, there was in that action, which turned very much to his honour, yet he is careful to transfer the honour to God, as appears by the psalm he penned on this occasion, v. 12. It is through God that we do valiantly.

4. His success against the Edomites. They all became David's servants, v. 14. Now, and not till now, Isaac's blessing was accomplished, by which Jacob was made Esau's Lord (~~1275~~Genesis 27:37-40) and the Edomites continued long tributary to the kings of Judah, as the Moabites were to the kings of Israel, till, in Joram's time, they revolted (~~1218~~2 Chronicles 21:8) as Isaac had there foretold that Esau should, in process of time, break the yoke from off his neck. Thus David by his conquests,

(1.) Secured peace to his son, that he might have time to build the temple. And,

(2.) Procured wealth for his son, that he might have wherewith to build it. God employs his servants variously, some in one employment, others in another, some in the spiritual battles, others in the spiritual buildings; and one prepares work for the other, that God may have the glory of all. All David's victories were typical of the success of the gospel against the kingdom of Satan, in which the Son of David rode forth, conquering and to conquer, and he shall reign till he has brought down all opposing rule, principality, and power: and he has, as David had (v. 2), a line to kill and a line to save; for the same gospel is to some a savour of life unto life, to others a savour of death unto death.

~~1085~~ 2 SAMUEL 8:15-18

DAVID CONQUERS EDOM

David was not so engaged in his wars abroad as to neglect the administration of the government at home.

I. His care extended itself to all the parts of his dominion: *He reigned over all Israel* (v. 15); not only he had a right to reign over all the tribes, but he

did so; they were all safe under his protection, and shared in the fruits of his good government.

II. He did justice with an unbiased unshaken hand: *He executed judgment unto all his people*, neither did wrong nor denied or delayed right to any. This intimates,

1. His industry and close application to business, his easiness of access and readiness to admit all addresses and appeals made to him. All his people, even the meanest, and those too of the meanest tribes, were welcome to his council-board.

2. His impartiality and the equity of his proceedings, in administering justice. He never perverted justice through favour or affection, nor had respect of persons in judgment. Herein he was a type of Christ, who was faithful and true, and who doth *in righteousness both judge and make war*, ~~<691>~~ Revelation 19:11. See ~~<971>~~ Psalm 72:1, 2.

III. He kept good order and good officers in his court. David being the first king that had an established government (for Saul's reign was short and unsettled) he had the modelling of the administration. In Saul's time we read of no other great officer than Abner, that was captain of the host. But David appointed more officers: Joab that was general of the forces in the field, and Banaiah that was over the Cherethites and Pelethites, who were either the city train-bands (*archers and slingers*, so the Chaldee), or rather the life-guards, or standing force, that attended the king's person, the pretorian band, the militia. They were ready to do service at home, to assist in the administering of justice, and to preserve the public peace. We find them employed in proclaiming Solomon, ~~<103>~~ 1 Kings 1:38.

2. Two ecclesiastical officers: *Zadok and Ahimelech were priests*, that is, they were most employed in the priests' work under Abiathar, the high priest.

3. Two civil officers: one that was recorder, or remembrancer, to put the king in mind of business in its season (he was prime minister of state, yet not entrusted with the custody of the king's conscience, as they say of our lord chancellor, but only of the king's memory; let the king be put in mind of business and he would do it himself); another that was scribe, or secretary of state, that drew up public orders and despatches, and recorded judgments given.

4. David's sons, as they grew up to be fit for business, were made chief rulers; they had places of honour and trust assigned them, in the household, or in the camp, or in the courts of justice, according as their genius led them. They were chief about the king (so it is explained, ~~<131817>~~ 1 Chronicles 18:17), employed near him, that they might be under his eye. Our Lord Jesus has appointed officers in his kingdom, for his honour and the good of the community; when he ascended on high *he gave these gifts* (~~<4048>~~ Ephesians 4:8-11), *to every man his work*, ~~<41334>~~ Mark 13:34. David made his sons chief rulers; but all believers, Christ's spiritual seed, are better preferred, for they are *made to our God kings and priests*, ~~<6006>~~ Revelation 1:6.