

DAVID'S VICTORIES.

– AUGUST 9. – 2 SAM. 10:8-19. –

Golden Text – "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?" – Psa. 27:1.

HILE it is true that David's reign was largely a succession of wars, with only occasional intermissions of peace, it should be noticed that these wars were not aggressive wars, or wars for conquest, but that they were always defensive. While David's policy toward the surrounding nations was wise and kind, they were not so disposed toward Israel. They were jealous of Israel's growing power and prosperity, and thus prompted, they made the attacks which David must of necessity repel as a loyal and patriotic servant of the Lord's people. The disposition of those nations was to exterminate or drive out the Lord's chosen people, and therefore the only righteous course for David to pursue was to fight.

While it is written, "Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God," it is also written, "Blessed be the Lord, my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight." The suggestion is plainly that there is such a thing as an ignoble peace, – a peace which comes from indifference to the principles of righteousness and truth, a peace dearly bought and ignobly maintained. But, on the other hand, it should be remembered that no battle is a righteous battle except when the Lord gives strength and teaches our hands to war and our fingers to fight, when the battle is the Lord's battle, for the maintenance of his honor, the establishment of the principles of his righteousness and the protection of his cause and his people. Under the typical Jewish dispensation this was done, properly, with carnal weapons; but under the dispensation of the spirit of God we are instructed that "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but [nevertheless, they are] mighty to the pulling down of strongholds." (2

Cor. 10:4.) And happy is the man who can always realize that the Lord's strength and skill are given to him while, with heroic Christian fortitude as a good soldier of the cross, he goes forth to fight the good fight of faith against the powers of darkness strongly intrenched on every side. Thus, indeed, he may win the reward promised to the overcoming soldiers of the cross (Rev. 2:7,11,17,26,28; 3:5,12,21), and also the blessing that is sure to the peacemaker; for the glorious peace that is won by the good fight of faith is a blessed peace, a peace resting on the sure foundations of the eternal principles of right. But beware, O Christian, that you never go to the battle without the assurance that the battle is the Lord's. Like David's, let your inquiry be, Lord, shall I go up to the battle? (1 Sam. 23:2,4; 30:7,8; 2 Sam. 5:18,19,22,23), and then, like him, wait for the answer in the assurance that the battle is the Lord's.

To all who are thus in the conflict, nobly contending – by their words, their actions and their general conduct – for truth and righteousness, against all who oppose themselves, we would say in the words of Joab to the hosts of Israel, "Be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people and for the cities of our God: and the Lord do that which seemeth him good." (Verse 12.) If the battle is the Lord's, it is sure to be victorious. "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him."

While the wars of David were not undertaken for conquest or plunder, but in defense of God's people, they nevertheless resulted in the enlargement of their territory, so that now, for the first time, was fulfilled the promise made to Abraham (Gen. 15:18), that his seed should possess the land from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates. The spoils taken from their enemies were also very great. There were shields of gold and vessels of silver, gold and copper. These were dedicated to the Lord, and reserved for the temple that Solomon was to build.

While noting the justice of the wars of David and the spirit of religious zeal in which he undertook them, his reverence for God and

his high sense of justice were usually very marked in even the little things of his life. For instance, when he was hidden in the cave of Adullam, with the enemies, the Philistines, encamped near by, and he thirsted greatly for water, so that three of his captains at the risk of their lives broke through the ranks of the Philistines and procured water for the king, David refused to drink it, saying, "God forbid it me: ...Shall I drink the blood of these men that have put their lives in jeopardy." Such water he considered too costly to drink, so he poured it upon the ground as an offering to God. (2 Sam. 23:13-17; 1 Chron. 11:15-19.) Few indeed among the kings of earth would consider any sacrifice of their fellow-men too costly to be bestowed on them. They feel that they are the lords of creation, and proudly claim, *as their right*, the luxuries purchased at the sacrifice of the rights and privileges of their fellow-men whom they regard as inferior beings and only made to serve them. But it was not so with David, whose sober estimate of himself was that he was only a brother to every other man, and that to God only was supreme reverence and honor due.

Another instance of David's lively sense of justice is that recorded in 1 Sam. 30:21-25, where David made an ordinance for Israel to the effect that those who in time of battle remained behind on account of physical weakness, or to guard the stuff, or the home, should share equally the spoils with those who went to the [R2016 : page 181] battle. The account is very explicit on this point. We read, "Then answered all the wicked men, the men of Belial, of those that went with David, and said, Because they went not with us, we will not give them ought of the spoil that we have recovered, save to every man his wife and children, that they may lead them away and depart. Then said David, Ye shall not do so, my brethren, with that which the Lord hath given us;... for who will hearken unto you in this matter? but as his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff: they shall part alike. And it was so from that day forward, that he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel unto this day."

This ordinance in Israel is the statement of a principle which has many applications. The wife, for instance, who cares for the home, should have an equal share with the husband, who, being relieved from such cares, has his time free to earn the money. They are rightfully "*heirs together* of the *grace of life*," as well as of the burdens of life. [R2016 : page 182]

The golden text of this lesson suggests the proper frame of mind for all the Lord's people who are now fighting the good fight of faith. Though the situation may look dark and dangerous, and though foes may multiply and perplexities increase, it bids them fear not – "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" David said, "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord." – Psa. 27:1-14.
