

January 18

Scriptures: Read 1 Chronicles 19 & 20

Key Verse: “Be of good courage, and let us be strong... And may the Lord do what is good in His sight.” (1 Chronicles 19:13)

Overview

The combined forces of the Ammonites and Syrians would likely have far outnumbered David’s army under the command of his nephew Joab, yet God was with His people to give them a great victory. The war began because of the disrespectfulness and cruelty shown David’s delegates by Hanun, the new king of Ammon. With honest and sincere intentions, David sent an official delegation to Hanun to offer his condolences upon the death of king Nahash, Hanun’s father and David’s friend. Hanun listened to the unwise advice of others who were suspicious of David’s delegation. They did the most dishonouring and shameful thing for an eastern man at that time. The unsuspecting servants of David were captured, their robes were cut off at the middle, and their beards were shaven off on one half of their face (as recorded in the parallel account in 2 Samuel 10:4). The importance of a man’s beard is seen by the fact that these men waited in Jericho until it grew back to a respectful length before returning to the royal city. (For more detailed information on the parallel account of the same story, see the “Day Unto Day” commentary on 2 Samuel 10).

The Ammonites, descendants of Lot, expected an Israelite retaliation; so they not only called out their own troops, but hired a fighting force from Syria. David had no choice but to order his men, led by Joab, to go against them in battle. Joab showed great faith and strength of character when he encouraged his soldiers to put forth their greatest effort so that God’s Name would be lifted up; he encouraged them to stand strong, surrender to God’s will, and trust that He would intervene on their behalf to do whatever seemed good in His sight. The soldier of the Lord Jesus Christ is similarly exhorted to “work out your own salvation... for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure” (Philippians 2:12-13).

It was God’s good pleasure to give His people the victory. He also gave Joab the wisdom to plan their strategy and gave the Israelites the strength required to defeat a great foe. The Ammonites retreated to the fortified city of Rabbah (present day Amman, Jordan), and the Syrians surrendered to Israel and became a vassal (a subjugated, tribute-paying nation). It was too late in the year to lay siege to the city, so Joab returned victoriously to Jerusalem and planned the siege of Rabbah in the spring, after the rainy season. When this city fell to the Israelites, they claimed much spoil, including a magnificent crown for David made of gold and gems.

The chronicler often omits details that we read of in the parallel accounts in the books of Samuel and Kings. He is writing the history as it relates to the nation as a whole, the priesthood, and the nation’s worship of God. He does not record the sin of David and Bathsheba which occurred at this point, when David did not go out to war with Joab but stayed home in Jerusalem (20:1; 2 Samuel 11:2-27). This may have been because the details of this story were common knowledge, or possibly because it had a personal bearing upon David. This story may also have been omitted simply because the inspired writer was not moved upon to write about it. Could it be that the

omission was meant to express the forgiveness of God? We know David sincerely repented, and God forgives and forgets.

Before the close of chapter 20, we read of other noteworthy victories of David and his mighty men. Three relatives of Goliath (a brother and two sons), who were also giant Philistine warriors, were courageously slain. No foe is too great for the one who has the living, all-powerful God on his side.

Prayer

Grant us, O God, the courage to always do what is right, and please give us Your divine strength as our daily portion so that we may be strong in our faith.