

David for some cause was dissatisfied with Joab, or the enemies were too formidable for Joab to cope with, David places himself at the head of the army. **18. Seven hundred chariots**—The parallel passage in 1 Chr. 19: 18 has seven thousand. The errors of copyists arise from the practice of designating numerals by letters with one or more dashes to indicate hundreds, thousands, etc. **Forty thousand horsemen**—In 1 Chr. 19: 18 it

reads forty thousand footmen. The Syriac version gives us here very reasonable numbers, namely, "Seven hundred chariots, four thousand cavalry and much people." (Pulpit Com.) **19. Servants to Hadarezer**—This gives us some idea of Hadarezer's great power. **The kings**—The petty kings of Rehob, Tob, and Maacah now acknowledged the supremacy of David and became tributary to him.

PRACTICAL LESSONS.

1. *Once again we are taught the lesson of doing good to the child for the parent's sake.* We have no record elsewhere of the kindness shown to David by the now deceased king of Ammon, to which reference is made at the opening of this chapter, but it was doubtless some good turn done during David's exile. David did not forget the kindness, and upon hearing the news of his death, sent messengers with words of condolence to the son. Death revives and quickens our memory of good deeds done towards us. Not only is this the case when those near and dear to us are taken away and we see in a new light the countless deeds of love they have done for us almost unnoticed at the time, but often a death notice in some paper from a distance will cause some memory of a kindness done by the one deceased towards us. Thus David's resolution was vivified here and he sent, for the father's sake, messages of sympathy to the son. It is sometimes all that we can do, but this we ought to do, and we shall find a melancholy pleasure in speaking or writing to the child of the good deeds wrought for us by the parent; we should be well disposed to the child for the father's sake.

2. *Our actions, done with the best intentions, are often misconstrued and misinterpreted.* Actions we intend as friendly offices are sometimes looked upon as hostile demonstrations. This was the case here. David sent messengers on a peaceful and even mournful errand, and they were treated as spies specially sent by him for hostile purposes. Thus frequently, in one way or other, our actions are misunderstood. This was a constant grief to our blessed Lord himself. Once he wrought a great miracle with beneficent intentions, and the multitude thought he had displayed his power for a purpose and attempted to make him a temporal king. Perhaps part of the object of that special embassy from heaven to the Mountain of Transfiguration was to comfort Christ with the assurance that he was understood in heaven if not on the earth. The servant is not above his Lord in this. We will be misunderstood at times. The best course is to act so as to leave little, if any, excuse for misunderstanding, and then go satisfied that God knows our intentions are good.

3. *We bring great discomfort and trouble upon ourselves by being too suspicious.* It would make life easier for us to think that men intend to do us good rather than evil. At any

rate it would be better to assume that people intend to be friendly towards us until we have clear evidence that they intend hostility. When the master of Naaman the Syrian sent a letter to the king of Israel, desiring earnestly that Naaman be cured of the leprosy, that king suffered great misery through imagining that the king of Syria, under pretence of asking a service, was really seeking a quarrel with him. So here the Ammonites brought great trouble upon themselves by imagining David's message meant hostility. It is not a good sign to be over-suspicious of motives and actions towards us, and it is fruitful of much unnecessary suffering.

4. *Conflicts are sometimes forced upon us against our will.* David's wars are many of them defensive rather than offensive and aggressive, and therefore more easily justified, even to those who oppose war. Self-preservation seems to be one of the instincts of life, and hence self defence, even to the point of violence, is justifiable. The law holds a man blameless who even kills another under circumstances which justify him that he is in imminent danger of his own life at the hands of that other. In this case the insult offered to David's messengers, gross and wanton as it was, seemed to come to David as a deliberate declaration of hostility, in the face of which he had to prepare for war. When unjustly attacked, without our giving any provocation, there is a place where non-resistance ceases to be a virtue.

5. *It is fortunate when we can urge courage in conflict by appeals to the loftiest motives.* Joab, though in many ways a fierce and relentless man, had a strong ground on which to appeal to the valor of his men when he said: "Let us play the men for our people and for the cities of our God." "Thrice is he armed that hath his quarrel just," says the poet. There is a divine side to patriotism. Another poet emphasizes that when he puts into the mouth of the Roman soldier the words:

"And how can man die better
Than facing fearful odds
For the ashes of his fathers
And the temples of his Gods."

"God and my right" is a good device for the nation's shield if we always remember its full meaning. Let all our conflicts be on the side of God and home and humanity.