



Studies in the Life of David

Text

Second Samuel 8:1-18

Topic

David conquers adversary after adversary in the name of the Lord

Title

“We Are the Champions of the Lord”

Introduction

We’re going to see King David’s success in several military campaigns. He advances and gains ground against Israel’s enemies in every direction of the compass.

It’s going to serve for us as Christians as an illustration of advancing and gaining spiritual ground in our campaign towards Heaven.

The New Testament, and especially the apostle Paul, frequently appeals to military illustrations and images to help us understand what it means to be a Christian on the earth.

One classic passage in which Paul refers to Christians as soldiers:

2 Timothy 2:3 You therefore must endure hardship as a good **soldier** of Jesus Christ.

2 Timothy 2:4 No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a **soldier**.

Then there is, of course, the famous passage in the sixth chapter of his letter to the Ephesian church where he describes the Christian as a soldier and encourages you to take up the whole armor of God.

The Roman army was especially adept in its advance against the enemy. They employed certain combat tactics to gain ground, e.g., the wedge formation and the tortoise formation.

- The Romans employed the wedge formation shaped like the point of an arrow to penetrate the enemy line. When the enemy line was penetrated, they advanced rapidly to defeat their enemies.
- The Romans used the tortoise formation to create an impenetrable shell by locking their shields together to protect their bodies and heads from arrows being fired or spears being thrown by the enemy. They advanced slowly toward the enemy until they penetrated their defenses.

We want to be advancing, gaining ground, do we not? To that end let's see what we can glean from King David's success.

I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 Check For The Characteristics That Indicate You Are Gaining Ground, and #2 Contend For The Character Traits That Indicate You Are Gaining Ground.

#1 Check For The Characteristics That Indicate You Are Gaining Ground (v1-15)

It's pretty obvious in a military campaign whether or not you are advancing and gaining ground. It's not so obvious in our spiritual campaigns because often our 'advance' involves things that initially seems to be setbacks. Things like sufferings, which always initially seems a setback, are used by the Lord to cause us to advance spiritually.

Thus we need to be able to identify certain spiritual characteristics of gaining ground - things we can 'see' with spiritual eyes even in our physical setbacks.

In the descriptions of David's advances and victories we can indeed identify a few characteristics of successful campaigns. We see in verse one that it is a characteristic of spiritual advance that we follow through when the Lord stirs our hearts to step-out in faith.

2 Samuel 8:1 After this it came to pass that David attacked the Philistines and subdued them. And David took Metheg Ammah from the hand of the Philistines.

“Metheg Ammah” is another name for Gath, the chief city of the Philistines. It’s root word means *bridle* or *curb*. Alan Redpath suggests that it describes the fact that the Philistines kept the Israelites *bridled* or *curbed* in their attempts to occupy all the land given to them by God.

Is there a ‘chief city’ in your life, something that holds you back from fully serving the Lord? It could be something like fear, for example. You hear about a ministry or a mission and feel prompted by the Lord to participate but then fear bridles you, curbs your enthusiasm, and you let the opportunity pass.

Maybe it’s time for you to advance! Start serving in the church. Start something at work or in your neighborhood to advance the Gospel. Follow through with the stirring on your heart.

We see in verse two that it is a characteristic of spiritual advance that we are led by the Holy Spirit rather than defaulting to old habits and traditions.

2 Samuel 8:2 Then he defeated Moab. Forcing them down to the ground, he measured them off with a line. With two lines he measured off those to be put to death, and with one full line those to be kept alive. So the Moabites became David's servants, and brought tribute.

David executed two-thirds of the Moabites using some sort of measuring system that commentators don’t fully understand. Even A.W. Pink, a commentator who normally sees an allegory in every verse, says he can’t really make sense of this measuring.

David employed different strategies in the various campaigns he found himself engaged in. So must we in our walk with the Lord. It’s a reminder to us that we must be led by the Holy Spirit.

If you’re anything like me, you are a creature of habit, and that carries over into your spiritual life. It’s great to establish spiritual habits so long as they don’t become old and stale.

For example, Jesus healed a lot of folks when He was on the earth. *He never healed a blind man the same way twice!* He listened to His Father and then proceeded as instructed.

Maybe it's time to take a 'measure' of your spiritual life and get some fresh perspective.

We see in verses three and four that it is a characteristic of spiritual advance that we utilize spiritual weapons against our adversaries, *not* the weapons of the world.

2 Samuel 8:3 David also defeated Hadadezer the son of Rehob, king of Zobah, as he went to recover his territory at the River Euphrates.

2 Samuel 8:4 David took from him one thousand chariots, seven hundred horsemen, and twenty thousand foot soldiers. Also David hamstrung all the chariot horses, except that he spared enough of them for one hundred chariots.

David made an assault against Hadadezer, king of Zobah, an area just north of Damascus. Hadadezer had gone on a campaign to the Euphrates River to recover some territory and in his absence David struck.

Why hamstring the horses? In Deuteronomy 17:16 the Lord instructed the Israelites to not multiply horses to themselves. The horse and especially the horse drawn chariot were major weapons of war. In those days it was like having a tank against foot soldiers. The Lord did not want Israel to begin to trust in weapons but rather to put their trust in Him.

It's an exhortation to us to take inventory of the weapons we employ. Do we use the methods of the world? We've talked before about the preference many Christians have for psychology over the spiritual disciplines of prayer and Bible study. Or how sometimes churches adopt methods that manipulate or intimidate in order to get to a godly goal.

Let's be sure the weapons of our warfare remain spiritual. The weapons of the world seem powerful at first but if we will determine to hamstring them we'll see that the Lord is our shield and fortress.

We see in verses five, six and fourteen that it is a characteristic of spiritual advance that we do whatever is necessary to keep from losing ground we've gained.

2 Samuel 8:5 When the Syrians of Damascus came to help Hadadezer king of Zobah, David killed twenty-two thousand of the Syrians.

2 Samuel 8:6 Then David put garrisons in Syria of Damascus; and the Syrians became David's servants, and brought tribute. So the Lord preserved David wherever he went.

2 Samuel 8:14 He also put garrisons in Edom; throughout all Edom he put garrisons, and all the Edomites became David's servants. And the Lord preserved David wherever he went.

David conquered these enemies and then, to be certain they did not grow strong again in his absence, he established outposts and left soldiers there to guard his victories.

We need 'garrisons' in our lives. We need to establish protections, for example, against falling back into the sins God has delivered us from. You know **what** it is, or **who** it is, that tempts you to sin. **Do whatever it takes to guard against it.** Jesus once suggested as an illustration that if your eye is the source of the problem, pluck it out. Or if your hand, cut it off. It was to stress the radical nature of sin and to emphasize we go to spiritual extremes, when necessary, to guard against it.

Back to verses seven through twelve. We see in them that it is a characteristic of spiritual advance that we invest in the work of God.

2 Samuel 8:7 And David took the shields of gold that had belonged to the servants of Hadadezer, and brought them to Jerusalem.

2 Samuel 8:8 Also from Betah and from Berothai, cities of Hadadezer, King David took a large amount of bronze.

2 Samuel 8:9 When Toi king of Hamath heard that David had defeated all the army of Hadadezer,

2 Samuel 8:10 then Toi sent Joram his son to King David, to greet him and bless him, because he had fought against Hadadezer and defeated him (for Hadadezer had been at war with Toi); and Joram brought with him articles of silver, articles of gold, and articles of bronze.

2 Samuel 8:11 King David also dedicated these to the Lord, along with the silver and gold that he had dedicated from all the nations which he had subdued -

2 Samuel 8:12 from Syria, from Moab, from the people of Ammon, from the Philistines, from Amalek, and from the spoil of Hadadezer the son of Rehob, king of Zobah.

The major emphasis in these verses is that David took the spoil he had won in these campaigns and “dedicated these to the Lord.” In other passages you learn that he was amassing a great treasury for the building of the future Temple by his son, Solomon.

We might say that David was investing in the building of God’s Temple. In our case it translates to giving to God’s work, first to the church, which is His temple today, and then to other works that further the Gospel.

This is perhaps the most practical and obvious of the characteristics we are listing. You’re either giving to God’s work or you’re not. Give and gain spiritual ground!

The final characteristic of spiritual advance in this text is that you be concerned with your reputation.

2 Samuel 8:13 And David made himself a name when he returned from killing eighteen thousand Syrians in the Valley of Salt.

David gained a reputation. In his case it was as a king with great military success. In our case it ought to be that we love the Lord and seek to serve him.

It’s a reminder that the way we live our lives will have an effect on those around us. To paraphrase Roz from *Monsters Inc.*, “they’re watching you, always watching you!”

There’s nothing wrong with being concerned about having a positive, spiritual impact on others - both believers and nonbelievers. Let them see your good works and then glorify God.

Here, then, is our check list:

- When God stirs my heart, I step-out in faith.

- Rather than reduce my spiritual life to a set, legalistic pattern, I am led by the Holy Spirit.
- I reject the methods and techniques of the world in favor of spiritual behaviors and disciplines.
- I guard against things that might cause me to sin or fall back in my walk.
- I am investing my money in the kingdom of God by giving to the work of God on earth.
- I am concerned about having a positive effect on both believers and nonbelievers so that they will be open to the love of Jesus Christ.

Hopefully we can go through those and say “Check” in each case!

#2 Contend For The Character Traits That Indicate You Are Gaining Ground (v15-18)

In the remaining verses we get a look at David’s administration as king, at what we today would call his ‘cabinet.’

Israel needed to be governed. **Our lives need to be ‘governed’ by God so that we are advancing and gaining ground.**

2 Samuel 8:15 So David reigned over all Israel; and David administered judgment and justice to all his people.

You and I may not be ‘kings,’ but almost all of us are given something to administrate.

- If you have a family, for instance, it is no small task to oversee its operations on a daily basis!
- At work you have something to administrate, even if others are over you.
- Same with your serving in the church.

David approached his duties with “judgment and justice to all his people.” John Gill, commenting on this, writes,

When he returned from his wars, he heard and tried all causes impartially, brought before him, and gave sentence according to the law of God, and administered righteous

judgment without any respect to persons; all had justice done them that applied unto him, whether high or low, rich or poor; and indeed during his wars he was not negligent of the civil government of his subjects, and the distribution of justice to them by proper officers.

The exhortation for us is to first look upon things like family and work and church as a spiritual administration by which we want to help others see Jesus.

2 Samuel 8:16 Joab the son of Zeruah was over the army...

General Joab led the army. As we've already said and seen, we are soldiers in a spiritual army. Add to that that we will **always** be at high alert while we are on this earth! We're in a battle, but not against flesh and blood. Our enemies are spiritual so our warfare must be spiritual. We need to maintain a military-mentality, marching forward on our knees.

2 Samuel 8:16 ... Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was recorder;

Jehohaphat was "recorder." According to *Easton's Bible Dictionary*, the recorder,

...brought all weighty matters under the notice of the king, such as complaints, petitions, and wishes of subjects or foreigners. He also drew up papers for the king's guidance, and prepared drafts of the royal will for the scribes. All treaties came under his oversight; and he had the care of the national archives or records...

The recorder brought matters to the notice of the king. **We do that as we seek the Lord in prayer!** The recorder was also concerned with the cares and complaints of citizens and foreigners. We are concerned to encourage the citizens of the kingdom of Heaven, and to evangelize nonbelievers.

Do you know Jesus Christ? Have you been saved?

2 Samuel 8:17 Zadok the son of Ahitub and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar were the priests...

Priests offered sacrifices for themselves and then on behalf of the people. In New Testament times all believers are called a "priesthood" and, so, this

reminds us to first offer ourselves as living sacrifices in order to serve the Lord by ministering to one another in the body of Christ and others who are yet outside as nonbelievers.

2 Samuel 8:17 ... Seraiah was the scribe;

The “scribe” in the Old Testament acted as a combined Secretary of State and Treasury Secretary. One commentator said,

We may think of them as the king's secretaries, writing his letters, drawing up his decrees, managing his finances.

We might apply this by saying that we should take our King’s dictation, as He speaks to us through the Bible. Then we are to go about as His living letters so others can ‘read’ about Him through our radically changed lives.

2 Samuel 8:18 Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over both the Cherethites and the Pelethites...

These, according to Josephus, were the king's bodyguards, and Benaiah is said to be set over his guards. Now, the Lord needs no defending from us. Neither does His Word need defending. Charles Spurgeon is credited with saying, “the Word of God is like a lion. You don’t have to defend a lion. All you have to do is let the lion loose, and the lion will defend itself.”

Ah, *but it must be let loose!* Here, then, we have encouragement to give an answer to everyone of the hope that is within us.

I admit this next statement is a stretch from the text, but it’s biblical. Be a bodyguard in this sense: Guard, by holding in high esteem, the body of Christ! Don’t be drawn into attacks on believers or churches. Defend against them for Christ’s sake.

2 Samuel 8:18 ... and David's sons were chief ministers.

“David’s sons were chief ministers.” As his descendants, they were in line to rule after him. David had them serving in his administration where he could teach them about the Lord.

Are you teaching your kids about the Lord? Evangelizing them? Are you with them often in the house of the Lord - or have other activities taken priority?

There is nothing more personally satisfying than to see your children saved, serving, and walking with the Lord.

All these offices speak to our character as believers. If character counts (and it does), it counts most that ours be spiritually grounded in the ways and the works of the Lord.

If you pursue Christian character, you will find yourself exhibiting the characteristics we checked for in the first part of the study. They go hand-in-hand.

