

Restoration to usefulness

1. Lessons in building and preserving unity

2. God gives assurance

3. God's special help at a time of need

4. Following the victory David is careful to maintain the unity of his supporters

• Jesus, likewise takes a lot of trouble to bind his church together

God was bringing David back to usefulness in his service. David was not only restored, but he was learning how to keep his forces together as one people. David's kingdom was eventually welded together as a great and mighty empire. Lessons in building and preserving such unity were being learnt at this point before the title of king came to David.

We have seen God give him an assurance he would recover everything, and that David learned how to allocate tasks wisely.

Thirdly, we note that God gave him guidance to speedily find the Amalekites. Sometimes in the work of the LORD one needs the exceptional help of God. God needs to bare his mighty arm and give us something unusual and unexpected. It would seem to be an impossible task to discover which of the various groups of Amalekites that were around were the ones that invaded Ziklag. Then it would be difficult to find their present whereabouts. But this gives God opportunity to display his marvellous ways. When David was in desperate need with his army threatening to rebel, unexpectedly they came across a member of the Amalekite forces. He is someone who has no special allegiance to the Amalekites since he himself is an Egyptian. He is treated kindly by the Israelites and gives them all the information they need¹. Here was a mark of God's special help in a time of need. When God is giving special help all the factors will come together to make it seem, if not a miracle, at least a marvellous combination of factors. It was wonderful that they should find this young man at all. It was wonderful that he should be an Egyptian with no special patriotism towards the Amalekites. It was wonderful that his having been abandoned by his master would make him all the more inclined to want to help another nation with whom he might have the chance of a fresh start. It is wonderful that he has the information as to the present whereabouts of the people who have abandoned him. When God is giving special help everything will combine to make it obvious that God is with us.

Fourthly, we note that when victory had been given, David is careful to maintain the unity of his supporters. David attacks the Amalekites, defeats them and regains everything that had been taken¹. Because some of his soldiers had been compelled to fight while others guarded the baggage there was an understandable but divisive feeling that those who had done the fighting should be entitled to the goods that had been recovered. But David would not allow one part of his army to profit from another part of his army. It would lead to jealousy and division and would weaken his army's ability to fight as a united force². It became a permanent ruling for Israel's army and contributed to the unity of Israel's fighting force in later days³.

The same is true of the church of Jesus. Jesus, our heavenly David, takes a lot of trouble to bind his church together, if we could but see it. The various members of the body of Christ, the church, are arranged in such a way 'so that there should be no division in the body'¹. The same principle applies even with regard to money. Those who are hard-pressed are relieved by those who have plenty, so that there will be an equality².

¹ 30:11-15

¹ 30:16-20

² 30:21-24

³ 30:25

¹ 1 Corinthians 12:25

² 2 Corinthians 8:14

• Jesus intercession

• Many appeals for unity in the New Testament

5. David took the trouble to secure goodwill among those who might have doubts about him

David has now become a greatly experienced leader of men

• Experience as the leader of a small army has prepared him to lead the nation of Israel

• God likewise takes as much time as it needs to prepare us for our calling

How much of the Scriptures are given over to preserving unity among God's people! Not only is it a part of Jesus' intercession^{☞1}, it is the concern of many of the appeals of the New Testament writings. How often there come appeals to 'stand firm in one spirit'^{☞2} and be 'like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose'^{☞3}. Any good leader will see preservation of unity as a skill he must acquire.

Fifthly, we note David took the trouble to secure goodwill among those who might have doubts about him. When he got back to his headquarters at Ziklag he sent some of the goods he had obtained from the Amalekites to the various cities in the areas where David and his men had often travelled in their many escapades. One can see several reasons why David would do this. It expressed gratitude for their support of him. It removed doubts that may have arisen because of his stay with the Philistines. It demonstrated that David's men were sufficiently effective as to have been able to win a major victory with a large amount of booty. A lesser man than David might not have bothered with such careful concern to secure goodwill.

These practical steps that David took to secure the unity of his troops and the goodwill of his acquaintances reveal that David has now become a greatly experienced leader of men. The experience he has gained as a leader of a small army has prepared him for the much larger armies he will have to lead as king of Israel. The unity he has been able to secure among his team of six hundred families prepare him to strive for unity amidst a nation of twelve varied tribes weakened by many years of harassment by the Philistines. David is now highly qualified both in the life of faith and in practical experience of men whether friends or enemies. He is ready for the kingdom. It has taken God many years to bring him from being a shepherd boy to readiness for kingship. God will do the same for us. Whatever our calling he will put us through whatever it takes for us to be ready. If it is a major calling it will take time. God will give us all the attention that we need and give us as much time as it takes for us to be ready. Then God will use us in a way that fits the background we have been given.

☞1 see John 17:21

☞2 Philippians 1:27

☞3 Philippians 2:2



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