

GOD PORTRAYS MORE WOMEN

by

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CHAPTER TWELVE

MICHAL

(I Samuel 17-II Samuel 6)

THE PHILISTINES HAD COME AGAIN to attack the Israelites and were encamped on a mountain on one side of the valley of Elah. Saul and his men were on the mountain on the other side. The three oldest sons of Jesse were with the army and had been gone from home more than forty days. Their father was anxious to hear from them. He prepared ten loaves of bread and an ephah of parched corn for his sons and ten cheeses for their captain. Then he called David and sent him early next morning to their camp with these things to learn of their welfare.

When David arrived, a ruddy stripling with handsome eyes and noble mien, he was shocked to hear the offensive insults hurled at Israel and Israel's God by the swaggering giant Goliath. David could not understand the dismay and fear of Saul and the whole army of Israel, and the failure of anyone to accept the giant's challenge to meet him in combat. The issue was a moral and spiritual one. He learned that the king had promised to anyone who would kill Goliath great riches, his daughter in marriage, and freedom for his father's house.

David offered to take up the challenge and avenge the insult to the Lord. His presumption roused the ire of his eldest brother Eliab who indignantly sought "to put him in his place." David's words were reported to the king who sent for him. **"David said to Saul, Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine"** (17:32). He told the king that on former occasions God had stood by him and given him strength to kill a lion and a bear. He was sure that God would deliver him from the giant.

Saul said, **"Go, and the Lord be with thee"** (17:37). David killed Goliath with a stone from his sling. Then, using Goliath's own sword, he beheaded the giant and brought his head to the king.

Jonathan's whole heart went out to David; he had never witnessed such courage and modesty in anyone. David and Jonathan were mutually attracted to each other. Jonathan insisted that David should be prince, and stripped himself to give David his own robe, garments, sword, bow and girdle. Saul commissioned David a general over his men of war, in which office he behaved prudently and became a favorite in the eyes of all the people, particularly in the eyes of the servants of Saul.

The day came when they celebrated the victory, and King Saul led the parade.

The women came out singing and dancing accompanied by musical instruments. One group sang, "**Saul hath slain his thousands.**" The other group responded, "**But David his ten thousands.**" The women were more just than wise. Then was Saul exceedingly angry and this saying was offensive to him. Can you hear him mumbling to himself: "They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands; and what can he have more but the kingdom?" (18:8). Surely, uneasy lies the head of him who wears a crown. "**And Saul eyed David from that day and forward**" (18:9). Eying anyone dries up all the milk of human kindness. The moral vision and sense of justice become totally distorted.

Normally, this would have been the day that at a banquet for the hero Saul would have announced the engagement of his daughter Merab to David. And in token of his valor he would have presented him with a large amount of money as well as given freedom from taxation to Jesse and his family as he had promised to do. But what are promises to a jealous man?

Instead, the palace was the gloomiest place in Israel; no one wanted to be near the king, for he was in such a depressed and sullen mood. David had soothed him on more than one occasion when he came to the palace. He began playing on the harp as he had done from day to day, and there was a javelin in Saul's hand. Twice Saul hurled his spear at his newly appointed general. Saul feared David because the Lord was with him and had departed from himself. He sent David away and demoted him to be captain over a thousand. But "**David behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and the Lord was with him**" (18:14).

Saul remembered his promise that he would give his daughter to the one who would kill Goliath. So he said to David: "**Behold my elder daughter Merab, her will I give thee to wife: only be thou valiant for me, and fight the Lord's battles.**" At the same time he was saying to himself: "**Let not mine own hand be upon him, but let the hand of the Philistines be upon him**" (18:17). Instead of being angry and demanding that Saul keep his deferred promise, David modestly replied, "**Who am I? . . . or my father's family in Israel, that I should be son-in-law to the king?**" (18:18).

Preparations were made for the wedding, but when the day arrived Merab was given to Adriel. Someone told Saul that his other daughter Michal loved David, and that pleased the king. He thought that through her he could turn the fury of the Philistines against David. So deep-seated was Saul's resentment toward him that he grasped at any idea which might destroy his unoffending enemy. He called his servants and ordered them to find out how David felt about Michal. Who replied: "**Seemeth it to you a light thing to be a king's son-in-law, seeing that I am a poor man, and lightly esteemed?**" (18:23).

A dowry worthy of a princess was more than he could give. Then the king declared that the only dowry he wanted was definite proof that David had killed one hundred Philistines. David and his men arose and slew two hundred of the enemy and delivered the foreskins on time. Saul then gave Michal his daughter to David.

A new terror seized Saul. David was now a member of his family, and he had a stronger claim to the throne than before.

His ability to lead men, his self-control, his sympathy for the people, and moral superiority, as well as the fact that **“Saul saw and knew that the Lord was with David, and that Michal . . . loved him”** filled the king with frenzy and panic. So savage was his obsession that he ordered Jonathan and all his servants to put David to death.

It must have been a relief to Michal and David to set up housekeeping by themselves away from the tense atmosphere of the palace with its jealousy and intrigue. Within easy reach were David's harp and other musical instruments. There was the place where he wrote his psalms, martial music, words and scores for his hymns. Michal might think her husband too religious, for it was his custom to praise the Lord seven times a day (Psalm 119:164). He liked to sing aloud upon his bed (Psalm 149:5).

Their happy home was not allowed to remain long unmolested. David's outstanding successes in battle aroused the demon in Saul again. When the evil spirit settled on Saul, David was called as before to soothe him with his music. Once more Saul tried to pin him to the wall with his javelin.

David dodged and made his escape. He harbored no thought of retaliation toward his father-in-law.

“Saul also sent messengers unto David's house, to watch him, and to slay him in the morning: and Michal David's wife told him, saying, If thou save not thy life tonight, tomorrow thou shalt be slain.”

Michal knew the soldiers were at the door and planned to help David escape. Perhaps she remembered how David's great-great-grandmother Rahab, helped the spies at Jericho. **“So Michal let David down through a window: and he went, and fled, and escaped”** (19:12).

Michal had an image in the house which she put in the bed on a pillow of goat's hair and covered it up. When the soldiers came in the morning, she told them David was sick.

When Saul heard that, he sent the soldiers back saying: **“Bring him up to me in the bed, that I may slay him. And when the messengers were come in, behold, there was an image in the bed . . . And Saul said unto Michal, Why hast thou deceived me so, and sent away mine enemy, that he is escaped?”** (19:15-17). She lied to her father saying, **“He said unto me, Let me go; why should I kill thee?”**

In memory of this experience David wrote Psalm 59. Verse 10 reads, **“The God of my mercy shall prevent [meet] me.”**

I thank God for the many written prayers to be found in the Bible.

- Let the penitent appropriate Psalm 51.
- Let the grateful soul find expression in Psalm 103.

“So David fled, and escaped, and came to Samuel to Ramah, and told him all that Saul had done to him. And he and Samuel went and dwelt in Naioth” (19:18).

Samuel received David very kindly. He had watched him ever since he anointed him when a boy. He had noted his behavior under provocation; he loved him and felt for him in this trial. Three times Saul sent messengers to take David, but they were hindered from doing so by the Spirit of God. Saul then came himself, but the Word of God as ministered by Samuel arrested the king, and he too prophesied.

During the following years David was hunted like a partridge on the mountains. His dwelling was in caves. Here he was joined by his father, mother and his brothers. Also many who were in trouble, difficulty or in debt joined him until there were four hundred men. But one person you would have expected to be there; his wife Michal did not come. We read: **“But Saul had given Michal, his daughter, David’s wife, to Phalti the son of Laish” (25:44).**

After Saul and his sons were slain, David became king over Judah. Abner, the general over the other tribes of Israel, wanted David to become king of Israel too. But David refused to even meet Abner until he brought Michal his wife to him. Ishbosheth, her brother, the reigning king of Israel, took Michal from Phaltiel and sent her with Abner to David. Her new husband followed after, weeping bitterly until Abner sent him back home. Soon after this, David was made king over all Israel and moved to Jerusalem.

The next time we read of Michal was after David had brought back the ark from the house of Obed-edom, and turned to bless his household. His face was radiant with joy and his heart filled with good will. And as the ark of the Lord came into the city of David, Michal, Saul’s daughter, looked through a window and saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord; and she despised him in her heart (II Samuel 6:16). Dante said Michal stood scornful and afflicted at her window.

Michal could not wait until David entered the house but came out to meet the king, saying: **“How glorious was the king of Israel today, who uncovered himself today in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself” (6:20).**

She had nursed her anger all day, and her words were sharp. She felt humiliated that David had dressed himself like a common priest and had associated himself with the common people. She felt no joy in the return of the ark.

“And David said unto Michal, It was before the Lord, which chose me, before thy father, and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the Lord, over Israel: therefore will I play before the Lord. And I will yet be more vile than thus, and will be base in mine own sight: and of the maidservants which thou hast spoken of, of them shall I be had in honor. Therefore Michal the daughter of Saul had no child unto the day of her death” (6:21-23).

But that is not the last we hear of Michal.

Years later there was a famine in the land that lasted three years, and David inquired of the Lord. The Lord answered: **“It is for Saul and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites.”**

Then the king asked the Gibeonites how he could atone for the wrong Saul had done that the land might be blessed again, and promised to do whatever they demanded. Their reply was, **“Let seven men of his sons be delivered unto us, and we will hang them.”**

To make up this number of Saul’s descendants he took the two sons of Rizpah and the five adopted sons of Michal. She had brought up her sister Merab’s children. What a blow that must have been to her! This is told in II Samuel 21.

One has well said that Michal is the divine mirror for all angry and outspoken wives. May our husbands not have to go outside the home to find sympathy, understanding, and fellowship in the things of God.

It is strange but true that one may live with one who is godly and remain unchanged. Judas lived and associated with Christ, received His ministry and confidence, but was untouched. Michal did not overcome herself that day and was the most miserable woman in Israel. No wonder we are told to bridle our tongues. She had reason to regret her actions the rest of her life.

~ end of chapter 12 ~

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