

# GOD PORTRAYS MORE WOMEN

by

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## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### ABIGAIL

(I Samuel 25)

OUR CHAPTER OPENS WITH: **“And Samuel died; and all the Israelites were gathered together, and lamented him, and buried him in his house at Ramah.”**

All Israel was affected by the death of Samuel. Every man was indebted to him for his ministry of the Word and his fervent prayers. His very presence was a deterrent of evil and encourager of good. Both Saul and David suffered a great loss with the removal of Samuel’s wholesome influence. Then, as now, we find death is a great leveler of prejudices and differences.

I suppose Saul and David both attended the funeral. Saul returned to his palace and David to the wilderness. His refuge at this time was in the vicinity of the country awarded to Caleb, that valiant, godly man, who in the strength of the Lord took this territory from the giants. One of his heirs, Nabal, lived there then. He was very wealthy and owned a large tract of land and great flocks of sheep. But sad to say, he had few of the moral and spiritual characteristics of his ancestor. He was inflated with his own self-importance. He loved to make a display and gave feasts “like the feast of a king.” He was amiable and boastful with strangers. Lord Byron’s description of such a man is applicable:

“And none did love him though from hall and bower He gathered revelers from far and near. His wife did not attend these parties and he didn’t even miss her. At home he **“was churlish and evil in his doings”** (25:3), snapping and snarling at everyone, so unreasonable that no one cared to speak to him.

But what kind of a wife had he? Abigail was a woman of good understanding and of a beautiful countenance. Her features were fine, and her expression revealed her charming character. When she was born, her father was so delighted with his lovely daughter that he called her “father’s joy.” How was it that she married such a man? The wedding was arranged by her parents. Of course Nabal wanted a good-looking girl who would be an ornament in his ancestral home. He behaved well before her father and mother and gave them a large dowry. It may be that they had some doubts when they heard of some of his evil conduct. But they might have argued that Nabal had such a godly background that all he needed was a good wife to steady him, and he would come out all right. And Abigail would be comfortable for life and able to do much good with her wealth.

All too soon Abigail learned that all the training, good background, and even a good wife did not remove the hardness and ugliness from her husband's heart. She was constantly embarrassed by the rudeness of her husband to worthwhile people. Daily, even hourly she needed to pray for grace to live with such a man. Unlike the modern girl, she did not immediately leave the difficult situation and run home to her mother. If Abigail had not been there, the servants would not have stayed a day. She was beloved for her kindly interest and godly counsel. Anyone who was so loyal to the Lord and to such a man would be a valued friend.

David heard in the wilderness that Nabal was about to shear his sheep. Knowing that was a time of feasting and hospitality, David sent ten young men to greet Nabal in his name and to wish him prosperity for himself, his household, and his goods. They said to Nabal that David and his men had acted as a voluntary police patrol to Nabal's flocks and shepherds; that he should ask his own young men and they would tell him the same. The messengers then suggested a material recognition of their services.

**“Give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to thine hand unto thy servants, and to thy son David.”**

Thus he claimed that he had looked after Nabal's interests as a son would look after the things that belonged to his own father. We daily receive protection and blessings from the Lord. Do we recognize His claim on us?

How was this reasonable, respectful salutation and request received? In the middle of the feast Nabal flew into a rage and poured out his anger and contempt on his benefactor. **“Who is David? Who is the son of Jesse? He is likely a runaway slave”** (25:10). We have a similar contemptuous expression, “Who does he think he is?”

Do we ever speak that way of those in difficulty or trouble; think the worst we can of them, their family, and friends? Let us take heed, we know not when the day of adversity may overtake us. Nabal goes on in a highhanded way: **“Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men whom I know not whence they be?”** (25:11).

How do I treat God's messengers to me? Do I send them word I will have nothing to do with them, I'll live my own life, have my own joys, and neither God's claims nor the needs of others will be considered? The suppliant today will be our judge tomorrow.

**“So David's young men turned their way, and went again, and came and told him all those sayings”** (25:12).

And David said to four hundred of his men: **“Gird ye on every man his sword . . . And David also girded on his sword . . . Surely in vain have I kept all that this fellow hath in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that pertained unto him”** (25:21).

And he vowed by morning there would not be left any of Nabal's household.

Is this the David we read about in the previous chapter when he was so generous to such an inveterate foe as the persecuting Saul; when he had the opportunity to slay him, and only cut off his skirt and was conscience-stricken because he had done that to the Lord's anointed? But in our chapter he is ready to slay every man on Nabal's estate! How can we account for such a change in the same man, magnanimous one day, vindictive the next?

We do not have far to look to see the reflection of such behavior. How can we account for our own variations? One day David had conquered Saul because he had conquered himself and behaved in the fear of the Lord. On another day the disparaging remarks of a fool set him on fire. His pride was touched, he was belittled. He had not consulted the Lord as to his actions nor did he wait for direction for his small army as he had been wont to do. He acted upon impulse; and out of God's control his sweet and gracious spirit vanished, and the hard and unjust commanded.

When resentful we do not do God's will. He did not even stop to think what Samuel would have advised under the same circumstances. He marched out to have revenge because he had been rudely insulted. When we are out of communion with God, we act like any sinner on earth. Sometimes we meet the catastrophes of life better than the irritating gnat-like pinpricks of the day; yesterday's communion does not guarantee today's.

Meanwhile Nabal's servants were not only indignant and thoroughly alarmed over their master's miserliness and insulting treatment toward those who had protected them as a wall day and night, they realized that if these mounted police were provoked, they were as powerful an adversary as a protector. Something must be done and quickly.

Nabal would brook no remonstrance, so they hurried to Abigail and reported the whole disgraceful affair. She grasped the situation and did some quick thinking while collecting the needed food that Nabal might have readily given to those in need. Womanlike she knew hungry men's dispositions were rather brittle. She hurried the food forward to precede her intercession for her surly spouse. How angry he would be had he known what she was doing! She mounted an ass to follow the present, and one can imagine how she prayed for wisdom and for the safety of her large household! She recalled all the worthy deeds of David and what injustice he had suffered at the hands of Saul. She prayed for tact and yet determined to be loyal to her household for Caleb's sake. She lighted from her beast and fell on her face before David and prostrated herself to the ground.

Her first words were thoroughly disarming. **"Upon me, my lord, upon me let this iniquity be."**

"I will be the sacrifice if you will only spare my foolish husband, I am willing to lay down my life for him." She would give Nabal space to repent and perhaps her devotion would soften his hard heart. David had never witnessed such self-effacing devotion—and to so unworthy a man. He could slay a God-defying giant, but not a God-fearing woman. Then she pleaded for liberty to speak respectfully. She admitted the base folly of her husband, then reminded David very tactfully that the Lord had thus prevented him from coming to shed blood and from avenging himself—which was unworthy of his character, as she says later, **"evil had not been found in thee all thy days."**

She reminded him that he had only fought the Lord's battles, not one for self-indication.

"The Lord will look after your honor; I know that God intends you to be king and knows the injustice you have suffered from Saul." That was enough to disarm David. But she encouraged him still more. "**The soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the Lord thy God**" (25:29). How beautiful a reminder! If God be for us who can be against us? Who touches you touches God, as the Lord said from Heaven to persecuting Saul, "**Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me.**" God's suffering saints were in the same bundle of life with Christ. "**No man can pluck them out of his hands.**"

"**And the souls of thine enemies, them shall he sling out, as out of the middle of a sling**" (25:29). In other words, you let God deal with your enemies; He can do it as readily as you handled Goliath with a sling stone.

"**And it shall come to pass, when the Lord shall have done to my lord according to all the good that he hath spoken concerning thee, and shall have appointed thee ruler over Israel . . .**" (25:30).

God will keep His Word, then you will not have the remorse of shedding blood causeless (the innocent household being slain with offending Nabal) and that my lord hath taken vengeance out of God's hands and bungled it with his own. "**But when the Lord shall have dealt well with my lord, then remember thine handmaid**" (25:31). David did not look much like a king coming into his kingdom that morning. But Abigail cheered his heart with the reminder of God's purposes for him. Like the thief on the cross she said, "**Remember me.**" Like him she received the assurance and blessing.

David said to Abigail, "**Blessed be the Lord God of Israel which sent thee this day to meet me**" (25:32). How many days in the week am I ready and meet to be sent by the Lord? The Lord knew the crisis in David's day, and He knew the person suited to help him. On this occasion it was not a prophet nor a soldier but a tactful, godly woman.

There was no thundering denunciation of David's anger and purposed injustice, but a gentle veiled reminder of his relationship to the Lord and of the Lord's confidence in him. Though Abigail was loyal to her family, she was not blind to their failures, neither was she prejudiced against helping one opposed to her kin.

Ask yourself, am I free to be sent of God today? Do I make excuses such as I am too busy; somebody won't like it; send somebody else?

"Blessed be thy advice." Has that ever been said to you? Here was a man who blessed God for the gracious words of a woman. "**Blessed be thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood and avenging myself with mine own hand. For in very deed, as the Lord God of Israel liveth, which hath kept me back from hurting thee, except thou hadst hastened and come to meet me,**" all would have died (25:33, 34).

Am I a help or a hindrance to others? How important it is not to defer to do what God lays on our hearts. **“Except thou hadst hastened and come to meet me,”** yes, not just sent a message, but took a personal interest and sympathy. This reminds us of the wisdom of the words: **“If thou . . . rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee . . . go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother”** (Matthew 5:23, 24). Don’t write a letter, go. That is good psychology.

David received her gift and said: **“Go up in peace to thine house; see, I have hearkened to thy voice, and have accepted thy person”** (25:35). Truly Abigail was a blessed peacemaker. David was like Apollos willing to be taught by a woman.

Abigail came to Nabal, and behold he held a feast in his house like the feast of a king. He had plenty for gluttonous revelry but nothing for David. He made merry with his ungodly friends. He was pleasant when drunk; but when sober he was glum, obstinate, and dour. How disgusting to Abigail to witness the debauchery on her return, but once more she displayed her good understanding by holding her tongue and refraining from deserved denunciation. She waited until morning till the wine had gone out of him. He had acted like a fool. Now with a big headache he learns of his peril; and as usual the fear of David’s revenge paralyze him. Ten days later the Lord smote Nabal that he died.

When David heard that Nabal was dead, he said: **“Blessed be the Lord, that hath pleaded the cause of my reproach, from the hand of Nabal, and hath kept his servant from evil; for the Lord hath returned the wickedness of Nabal on his own head. And David sent and communed with Abigail, to take her to him to wife”** (25:39).

Michal had been married off to Phaltiel, and no wonder David wanted to have the love and counsel of such a wonderful woman as Abigail. She did not scorn to be identified with the rejected David and share his wilderness wanderings. She was happier with David in a tent than with Nabal in a mansion. Since Samuel died David had not received such spiritual help as he did from her who was prepared and meet for the Master’s use. May each of us be a true Abigail, a joy to our Father’s heart, and an encourager wherever we are.

~ end of chapter 13 ~

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