

GOD PORTRAYS MORE WOMEN

by

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CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE WISE WOMAN OF ABEL

(II Samuel 20)

WHEN ABSALOM SOUGHT to take the kingdom from his father David, the battle was fought in the forest of Ephraim, and there was a great slaughter that day. As Absalom found himself among David's men, he turned to flee in terror and, spurring on his mule, drove him under a great oak. The thick boughs hung low and caught his head as he passed beneath, lifted him off his beast, and held him suspended in midair. When Joab heard of it, he took three darts and thrust them through Absalom's heart. This ended the rebellion.

Before the battle David had divided his men into three groups and charged the leaders in the hearing of the soldiers, "**Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom**" (18:5). But Joab had determined to protect David from his disloyal son. Matthew Henry says, "David is inclined to spare him, but divine justice passes sentence upon him as a traitor, and sees it executed. It was fit that it should be so, his crime being so monstrous."

Those who had been charmed by Absalom's beauty, his kisses, and great promises soon swung back, as a mob often does, to their old loyalties and spoke of bringing David back to the royal city. The last few verses tell of the foolish quarrels between the elders of the ten tribes and the elders of Judah.

The enemy of souls is never slow to take advantage of such a moment of jealous discussion to get in his devilish work.

There happened to be there a man of Belial, whose name was Sheba. He knew that jealousy was excellent ground in which to sow seeds of dissension. The psychological moment had arrived. He blew a trumpet. He was a sower of discord among brethren who tried to gain the ear of all. A moment ago the men of Israel had said, "**We have ten parts in David,**" now he used as his war cry, "**We have no part in David, neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: every man to his tents, O Israel**" (20:1). He gathered a following of disgruntled Israelites and visited all the tribes. How these stirrers-up of strife can travel! He became a busybody in other men's matters. One of the seven things the Lord hates is "**he that soweth discord among brethren.**"

Sheba was busy with his mischievous work away up north among the tribe of Naphtali in the city of Abel when Joab and the army found him.

He was perhaps like those Jude speaks of, “**certain men crept in unawares.**” He was using his wiles to gain a following against David. Just then the city was surprised to learn that they were being besieged by Joab. He resented his demotion from the generalship, disposed of the new appointee, took charge himself, and called on all who were loyal to David to follow him. We can imagine the state of the city when they saw the trenches being prepared, the battering-rams being drawn up, and they were pounding at the walls.

But in that city was a woman of real discernment. She was not taken in by the arguments of the newcomer, or of his supporters, and knew that he was a traitor to the king and a troublemaker. She had not only wisdom and discernment, but an innate courage that inspired others. She was not afraid of General Joab or of her brethren when she had a conviction before the Lord. Matthew Henry says, “Nor is the treasure of wisdom the less valuable because found in the weaker vessel.” This is not the first time recorded in Scripture when a woman’s sagacity saved a national disaster in time of war.

We do not find the elders or magistrates seeking a conference with Joab to reach an amicable settlement. Joab in his method of attack was acting most unscripturally. In Deuteronomy 20:10 instructions were given that before demolition of a city, peace was to be offered, and thus many lives might be spared as well as property and food.

This wise woman, with no doubt some silvery locks, courageously leaned over the wall and called to the first man she saw: “**Hear, hear; say, I pray you, unto Joab, Come near hither, that I may speak with thee.**” I wonder if she reminded the young man of his mother. And when Joab was come near unto her, she said, “**Art thou Joab?**” She lost no time. “**Do you hear me?**” He answered, “**I do hear.**” In other words, “Are you paying attention? What I have to say is worthwhile.”

In olden times when a matter of importance was at issue, it was customary to consult those of this city for their judgment on the matter. And their decision was not questioned but acted on and it proved the wise course to take.

“**I am one of them that are peaceable and faithful in Israel.**” Was this a reminder to Joab that he had not sought the peace of the city according to the Word? “**Thou seekest to destroy.**”

Destruction is the Devil’s work. Upbuilding is the Christian’s. “**Thou seekest to destroy a city.**” Many are involved. You are wrong in thinking that everyone in the city is in sympathy with the traitor or is confederate with him. Then she appealed to his manliness and humane traits. “**Would you destroy a mother, peaceable, loyal and faithful? Why wilt thou swallow up the inheritance of the Lord?**” She inferred that he might be found fighting against God.

Her words took effect in the heart and conscience of the attacking general. He was not above taking godly advice from a mother in Israel. And Joab answered, “**Far be it, far be it from me, that I should swallow up or destroy.**” It is a happy thing when one is willing to retrace his steps when the error of his course is pointed out to him. Some are stubborn in pursuing a course even when being shown that it is wrong.

He asked to state the matter as he saw it. What wisdom there is in consultation and hearing both sides of a matter!

“Sheba . . . hath lifted up his hand against the king, even against David: deliver him only, and I will depart from the city.” The charge was clearly stated. We are only called on to judge manifest evil—not on evil surmisings and suspicions. She answered, **“Behold his head shall be thrown to thee over the wall.”**

Then the woman went unto all the people in her wisdom. Did she need as much or more wisdom to reach the elders and people of the city than she did to get the attention of the commanding general of the army? Sometimes party spirit is difficult to deal with and overcome.

In the early church schism arose and caused great distress of heart to Paul and others who said, **“I am of Paul; I am of Cephas.”** Paul adds, **“Who then is Paul? Who is Cephas?”** When we follow men and factions we have lost sight of Christ. It is a sad thing when “the meeting” or the church takes the place; of Christ.

The elders and people recognized that the cause of this attack was Sheba and dealt with him as the wise woman advised. Definite evil is to be summarily dealt with to prevent its spread, its contagion, and infection. And they cut off the head of Sheba and cast it to Joab. And he blew a trumpet and they retired from the city every man to his tent, and Joab returned to Jerusalem unto the king.

What a lesson for every Christian woman; it is her responsibility to know the mind of Christ for the moment as revealed in His holy Word and to use the wisdom gained therein! She must not be afraid of the face of man when she knows her convictions are right. She must also have the courage of her convictions and, with her tact, prudence, and womanly influence, to inspire others to courage. By following this wise woman’s godly advice, mercy was shown to many.

Thank God for all the women among us who are for peace, and are faithful and motherly in the family of God!

~ end of chapter 16 ~

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