

GOD PORTRAYS MORE WOMEN

by

Grace E. Mc Allister

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CHAPTER FIVE

ZELOPHEHAD'S DAUGHTERS

(Numbers 27, 36)

THIS QUINTETTE OF GIRLS may well be called the Old Testament's "**five wise virgins.**" Their special problem recorded in these chapters was the last thing Moses attended to before appointing his successor and ascending Mount Nebo to die. It is rather touching to notice that his final concern was looking after the interests of five orphaned girls.

When Moses wrote the books of the law, he gave specific instructions eleven times about the way they were to care and provide for the widow, the fatherless, and the stranger.

Let us look at Deuteronomy 10:17, 18 as an example, "**For the Lord your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward.**" After such a picture of his majesty and power notice what we are told next. "**He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment.**"

No wonder Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah had no feeling of fear when they came to present their case before Moses, and Eleazar the priest, and the princes, and all the congregation before the door of the tabernacle. They knew that God's devoted servant Moses would plead their cause in the sympathetic ear of the Lord. They were women of spunk and determination. Though they had no near male relative to speak for them, they did not hire a lawyer. They felt that the righteousness of their case was a sufficient argument. They were sure their audience would assent to that which was just, and they had confidence in the men whom God had appointed as judges.

Perhaps Mahlah, who is named first, was the eldest and the spokeswoman. She stated their case clearly and concisely. She first paid tribute to their father and his life. She pointed out that though he had died in the wilderness he had not been a rebel against the Lord as Korah was. His sins were not the kind which should cause any of his children to lose their inheritance. The sins of some parents handicap their children for life. These girls respected their father and desired to be worthy of him. They put a real value on their father's share of the inheritance and wanted to retain what God had assigned to him. They were not willing to give it up without doing something about it.

Many of us have been blessed with godly parents. Do we prize the “**name which is above every name**” (Philippians 2:9) which our parents cherished and by which they were called Christians”? Do we value the truth which was precious to them and so dearly bought? It cost them much to take a stand for Christ among their friends. They learned by experience the meaning of “**buy the truth, and sell it not**” (Proverbs 23:23). Buy it at all costs, sell it at no price.

The children of Israel had not yet reached the Promised Land. They had never seen the land which was to be theirs. But these women were making sure of their future. How many of us live only in the present, fully occupied with that which can be seen in our homes, storehouses, or barns? But moth and rust may destroy and thieves may take them from us. So we are advised to “**lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal**” (Matthew 6:20).

He who is rich toward God has an inheritance, incorruptible and undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for all who are kept by the power of God unto salvation. Such a person has no dread or fear of the future.

These girls were descendants of Jacob’s favorite Joseph, and their portion was in the choicest section. We, through our new birth, are related to God’s beloved Son. Through Him we share in all the blessings that are His. Do we value our position as we should?

God has given us all our advantages, gifts, and possessions. But He will judge us for the way we use them. “**As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God**” (I Peter 4:10).

He condemns the man who lives for himself and buries his talent or pound in a napkin as the wicked servant did in the Lord’s parable. He was punished because he did not do what he should have done. The same chapter gives an example of what will be rewarded. “**I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me**” (Matthew 25:35, 36). Kindness to the needy, Christ counts as a special service to Himself.

In another place we read: “**To do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased**” (Hebrews 13:16). “**Ye did it unto me**” will be ample reward for those who love Him. But those who are selfish and indifferent to the Lord’s interests and man’s need will never enjoy His commendation.

These five sisters said, “**Give unto us therefore a possession among the brethren of our father.**”

But the prodigal son asked for his portion of goods that he might waste it in the far country in riotous living. They were content to be in the company of the Lord’s people and share their responsibilities, while his one desire was to get away from his home and his father.

“And Moses brought their cause before the Lord. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, The daughters of Zelophehad speak right: thou shalt surely give them a possession of an inheritance among their father’s brethren; and thou shalt cause the inheritance of their father to pass unto them” (Numbers 27:5-7).

Whenever we present our cause to the Lord, we find a ready ear and an appreciative understanding heart. He delights to have us value His gifts. **“Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass”** (Psalm 37:5).

Their appeal was recognized as just and righteous, and a law was passed to govern such cases. Thus the precedent was established for all future generations. The right attitude of these women had an important influence on the lives and rights of all women since their day. How true it is that no man lives to himself, and no man dies to himself!

Later on another complication arose because these daughters were now the owners of shares in the tribal inheritance. They were considered desirable wives, and many young men were interested. As their uncles studied the would be husbands, they noticed some of them belonged to the other tribes, and feared that should they be successful in winning any or all of their nieces, that part of the inheritance would be lost to their tribe.

They brought this problem to Moses who, as before, consulted the Lord about this new question. Moses said, **“The people come unto me to inquire of God”** (Exodus 18:15).

Does anyone come to you to have you pray with him about his problems?

When Moses had prayed about this case and considered it well, he said: **“The tribe of the sons of Joseph hath said well. This is the thing which the Lord doth command concerning the daughters of Zelophehad, saying, Let them marry to whom they think best; only to the family of the tribe of their father shall they marry. So shall not the inheritance of the children of Israel remove from tribe to tribe; for every one of the children of Israel shall keep himself to the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers. And every daughter, that possesseth an inheritance in any tribe of the children of Israel, shall be wife unto one of the family of the tribe of her father, that the children of Israel may enjoy every man the inheritance of his fathers. Neither shall the inheritance remove from one tribe to another tribe; but every one of the tribes of the children of Israel shall keep himself to his own inheritance. Even as the Lord commanded Moses, so did the daughters of Zelophehad”** (Numbers 36:5-10).

These young women were eager to contribute their portion to their new homes. The old-fashioned custom of the bride preparing her hope chest, filling it with linens, china, silver, and sundry other things had a very wholesome result. That very contribution tended to stabilize the marriage. What a contrast to the unions of these abnormal days! Many of the girls today contribute nothing to their new homes. They bring themselves, their makeup, and their clothes, thinking that nothing else is necessary to retain the love of their husbands.

The awakening so often is very sad. They have married in haste and now repent at leisure. Every Christian woman who marries, if she lives in communion with the Lord, has the daily privilege of contributing something spiritual and stabilizing to her husband and children. *It is the wife and mother who gives tone and character to the home.*

Many young Christians marry without consulting the wishes of God or their earthly parents. Yes, they marry whom they think best, forgetting the explicit requirement to marry “**only in the Lord.**”

For our own comfort He has told us not to be “**unequally yoked with unbelievers.**” He warns of the incompatibility that will result. Righteousness can have no fellowship with unrighteousness, nor light with darkness. No concord could exist between Christ and Belial. There could be no agreement between the temple of God and idols. God would spare us from being linked all our lives with such unsuitable companionship.

There should be fellowship, harmony, communion, equal participation, and mutual enjoyment of each other and the things of God to have true and lasting happiness.

The commandments of our Lord are not grievous but are for our greatest good. He wants to dwell with us in our homes, to walk with us, to be our God, and to have us for His people. If we honor His wishes, He has promised to be a Father to us, care for us, and be responsible for all our needs.

Dear girls, consult God’s pleasure about your marriage. May it be said of you, “**As the Lord commanded Moses, so did the daughters.**”

Truly they were five wise virgins.

~ end of chapter 5 ~

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