

I Samuel 25

The Acts of Abigail

Someone once wrote, “Abigail is one of the most attractive women in the histories of the Old Testament.”

The name Abigail means, “*The joy of his father.*” yet her father could not promise himself much joy of her, when he married her to such an husband like Nabal.

It seems that the father of Abigail was more interested in Nabal’s wealth than his wisdom when looking for a suitable husband for his daughter. Abigail paid an high price for marrying Nabal.

Now at the time of David’s sojourn in I Samuel 25, Nabal held his annual sheep-shearing. This was equivalent to the harvest of the shepherds, and was commonly finished with a joyous feast. It was a season of celebration and thanksgiving.

David knew that Nabal had peculiar reasons for being satisfied with the returns from his shepherds, because during his visit in the area, David had considered himself the guardian of Nabal’s property,

and on the testimony of the shepherds, had protected the flocks of Nabal and had been a wall around them by night and day, so that neither were they injured by anyone, nor had they missed anything all the time that David and his men had been beside them.

Where such services were accepted and counted upon, it was fair, and indeed according to the custom of the time, that some recompense in kind should be made. It was an unwritten law. David was perfectly justified in sending ten young men to greet the opulent sheep-master, Nabal, in the day of prosperity, to remind him of his obligations to them.

But they were bitterly disappointed in their expectations. Nabal, a man “churlish and evil in his doings,” as I Samuel 25 describes him, did not comply even so much as to return thanks for the friendly salutation which had been brought to him, but angrily, and with a stern countenance, said to the messengers, “Who is David? And who is the son of Jesse?”

Stung by the words of Nabal and repulsed by his actions, David ordered four hundred of his men to arm themselves and follow him, going forth, and vowing the deepest vengeance, and determined not to leave a single survivor of all those who belonged to the household of Nabal.

However, by the prompt and prudent actions of Abigail, Nabal's wife, David was saved from carrying out his rash and impulsive plan. There are many great truths that we can learn from this godly woman Abigail. Truths that apply to both men and women. The title of my message is, *The Acts of Abigail*. There are four things I would like to consider from the life of this remarkable woman.

1. Abigail was *loyal* to her husband. Abigail's act of *loyalty*.

One might have thought that the prospect of just punishment falling on the man, Nabal, whom Abigail could never have loved, and from whom she had probably received nothing but heartache, would have been a welcome sight for Abigail, especially when he had brought it on himself, and she was entirely unconcerned in the matter.

But this was not her way. She was loyal to her husband even when he deserved no loyalty. It might be impossible for her to love him or respect him, but she could defend him, and stand between him and his folly.

Notice that as soon as Abigail met David she proceeded at once to confess the fault that had been committed, the fault for which she made herself responsible: “Upon me, my lord, upon me be the iniquity.”

A Bible commentator writes, “It has often been regarded as a flaw in Abigail’s character that she did not defend her husband against the charge of folly, but rather suggested that to David as an excuse for what had happened. But her one chance of saving Nabal was to repudiate him, and to show how hateful his conduct seemed even to her, his wife.”

Abigail wanted David to dismiss Nabal from his thoughts, fool by name, fool by nature, an utterly insignificant creature, not worthy of his regard. Let his eyes rest on her. It was with her that he had to do.

And she, the wife, had not seen the young men when they came, so that she had not immediately been able to attend to their requests. As she spoke, she saw that she had arrested the hand of the avenger; his anger was subsiding; he was ready to listen and be convinced.

The husband is the one more frequently converted by the chaste conversation of the wife. For the wife learns to know her husband better than he knows himself, to discern the weakness and the strength; and so to lead him gently to the higher levels of his life.”

Abigail was loyal to her husband.

2. Abigail was *wise* in her dealings with people. Abigail’s act of wisdom.

The first thing that is said of Abigail is recorded in verse 3, “...she was a woman of good understanding, and of a beautiful countenance...”

The wisdom of Abigail saved the life of her worthless husband, and all the servants of his large estate.

Someone once said, “Abigail is the ideal married woman of the Bible.”

Other women had perhaps more heroic qualities, but Abigail is the most essentially feminine of all the notable women of Scriptures. She has what is possibly the most useful of all woman's gifts. She had tact. What is tact?

It may be defined as that spiritual sensibility which instinctively knows not merely the right thing to say, but-what is much less common-when to say it and how to say it.

Abigail possessed this gracious quality in great measure. We see that suggested even by her handling of her husband, though in his case it seems to have been largely thrown away.

Instead of attempting the apparently impossible task of brining Nabal to a right way of thinking, she set off at once to meet David herself, and so protect her husband, herself, and everyone else in the family.

Again, when Abigail comes home and finds Nabal intoxicated, she putts off her unpleasant news until the morning. She does her best to spare her husband, and it is not her fault if the result is a failure.

But still more do we see Abigail's tact in her dealings with David. If ever a woman was placed in a difficult position Abigail was, with her foolish husband on the one side and the infuriated David on the other. Yet she carries through her task successfully.

Not only does she gain her request, but she touches at once the conscience and the heart of her enemy. It is hard to tell a man he is doing wrong and yet keep him from taking offence at you. Yet that was what Abigail did with David.

“Quiet tact will always have the soft word to speak in time to turn away anger. It knows how to avoid unsafe ground. It can put all parties into a good humor when there is a danger of difference or clashing. It is silent when silence is better than speech.”

Abigail was wise in dealing with people.

3. Abigail was *the instrument* of the Lord. Abigail's act of restraint.

The providence of God acts as a restraint on the wicked deeds of men; and in this case Abigail was instrumental in carrying out God's purposes.

The power of sin was evidently held back by God. David acknowledges this in verses 32-34:

“And David said to Abigail, Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me: And blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from 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 hasted and come to meet me...”

The means God employed to stop David and turn him back from the path of wrong-doing was destined to be the prudent Abigail. She pointed first of all to the leadings of God, by which David had been kept from committing murder through her coming to meet him.

We read in verse 26, “Now therefore, my lord, as the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, seeing the LORD hath with holden thee from coming to shed blood, and from avenging thyself with thine own hand, now let thine enemies, and they that seek evil to my lord, be as Nabal.”

Furthermore, it was Abigail who the Lord used to place before David a high ideal for the future. By her promises of the rich blessings with which the Lord would reward David, she gave such clear and distinct expression to her firm belief in the Divine election of David as king of Israel that her words almost amounted to prophecy.

We read in verse 28, "...for the LORD will certainly make my lord a sure house; because my lord fighteth the battles of the LORD, and evil hath not been found in thee all thy days."

Then followed the powerful words, full of deep meaning in verse 29: "The soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the Lord thy God."

The metaphor is taken from the custom of binding up valuable things in a bundle to prevent their being injured. The words refer primarily to the safe preservation of the righteous on this earth in the grace and fellowship of the Lord.

Whosoever is hidden in the gracious fellowship of the Lord in this life, no enemy can harm him or injure his life, the Lord will not allow to perish, even though temporal death should come, but will then receive him into eternal life.

There was power in Abigail's argument derived from her appeal to David's sense of the wrong of revenge. But that which evidently touched David most was her reference to his being the object of God's love and care. To be restrained by a loving God, to be in favor with Him amidst the wrongs of evil men, to have an interest in the higher spiritual life which is nourished and guarded by God, was more than all beside.

David recognized the hand of God in Abigail's coming-this mercy had a heavenly origin; and he praised God for his restraining grace in his life.

He admitted that he had formed a very sinful purpose; but he abandoned this wicked purpose, accepted Abigail's offering, and sent her away in peace. "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me; and blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, which has kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand." (verses 32-33)

“It is a mark of grace to be thankful for being kept from sinning than for being rescued from suffering.”

It was not long before David had convincing proof that it is best to leave vengeance in the hands of God. Early or later the Nabals receive their reward, even without the Davids requiring to become their own avengers.

Therefore, God brings out of darkness light, out of sin virtue, out of confusion order.

There is a story of Hudson Taylor, the missionary to China, in his early years meeting two men who appeared to be friendly. Engaged in conversation with one of them, Taylor did not notice the movements of the other, who suddenly rubbed into his eyes a mixture of pounded glass and mud calculated to blind him for life. Sightless and in desperate pain Taylor who wholly at their mercy, and there in not knowing what might have happened had not Joseph Beckett, a policeman, coming down Church street at the time, hastened to his assistance.

Seeing the magistrate the ruffians made off, but before Mr. Beckett had recognized one of them, a professed infidel and no friend to Christianity.

Poor Taylor was taken home in great suffering, and it was fully three months before he could return to work again. His employer urged him to take out a summons, having himself witnessed the occurrence. But Taylor would not hear of it.

“No,” he said, “the Lord is well able to deal with them. I would rather leave it in His hands.”

This did not satisfy the judge, however, who decided to carry the prosecution through on his own account. In the witness-box the culprit denied the charge, calling upon God to strike him blind if he had anything to do with the outrage.

Shortly after, all the county knew that he had lost his sight. For the rest of his life he had to be led by a dog through the familiar streets, and ultimately sank into extreme poverty. His accomplice also was obliged to confess that nothing ever prospered with him from the time of their cruel attack upon Hudson Taylor.

Abigail was the instrument of the Lord.

4. Abigail was rewarded for her faith by the Lord. Abigail's acts rewarded.

Abigail was very brave to go to David with provisions. Imagine what a man like Nabal would have done to her once he found out what she had done. Perhaps he would have killed her for going against his wishes.

“Faith is a great preservative against the sinful slavish fear of men, as it sets God before the soul, and shows the vanity of the creature and its subordination to the will and power of God.”

We read in Hebrews 11:6, “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”

The reward is Christ Himself diligently "sought" and "walked with" in communion here, and to be fully enjoyed hereafter. Compare Ge 15:1, "I am thy exceeding great reward."

How was Abigail rewarded? 1). Her wicked husband was struck down. The Lord executed vengeance on Nabal. 2). David admired her so much he married her. 3). Abigail bore David a son and called him

Daniel.

In closing, the acts of Abigail are remarkable in I Samuel 25. She was loyal to her husband; she was wise in her dealings with people; she was the instrument of the Lord; she was rewarded for her faith by the Lord. May the acts of Abigail find place in our lives and bring glorify to our Redeemer Jesus Christ. Let us pray!