

Seek Ye First...

"...the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33).

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CALEB—A HERO FOR THE AGES

Michael Light

One of the greatest characters in the Bible is the great warrior of God, Caleb. In this modern age of political correctness it is very difficult to find true heroes. Romans 15:4 reminds us, "Whatsoever things were written afore time were written for our learning," so we should look back at the lives of those who have gone before and learn from their successes and failures.

There are a few characters in the Bible who are great examples of what we should all be. Caleb is one such person. Caleb was one of the most courageous of all Old Testament characters. His courage was first displayed after his return from his spy mission into the Promised Land. He was willing to stand with God when the crowd was more than willing to oppose God's will.

Ten of the spies returned with "bad news." They stated that taking the land was beyond their ability to do. Joshua and Caleb said just the opposite. In fact Caleb, "stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once and possess it; for we are able to overcome it" (Numbers 13:20). He also said, "If the Lord delight in us, than he will brings us into the land, and give it unto us" (14:8). Caleb was simply trying to get the people to go up and possess the land which God had promised. They in turn desired to kill him. In Numbers 14:10 we read: "the congregation bade stone them with stones." These people would rather have killed Caleb than listen to his words of exhortation.

We too must be prepared to face adversity when we decide to stand for the truth. There are those who will oppose us with every fiber of their being before they will submit to God's will. Do we possess the courage of Caleb? Will we stand with God, if we must stand alone?

Caleb would not be conformed to sin. A key to appreciating Caleb is found in Numbers 14:24, "My servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land where he went; and his seed shall possess it." We too must possess "another spirit." Many in the Lord's church must come to grips with the fact that as God's children we are not like everyone else, and standing for the truth will not be popular with those of the world. Too many Christians are more concerned about what everyone else thinks about them than what God

thinks. Matthew 6:33 still says, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

Caleb also teaches us a lesson on the need for patience. Due to no fault of his own, Caleb was forced to wander in the wilderness for forty years. He suffered because of the faithlessness of the children of Israel. The steadfastness of Caleb's commitment to God during these troubling (and wasted) years is a great testament to the character of the man. It is indeed difficult to stay the course when others bring undeserved heartache and problems to us. Caleb never blamed God and simply waited for the day when he would be allowed to cross over to the Promised Land.

Caleb illustrates the fact that there is no retirement plan in the Lord's church. At the ripe old age of eighty-five he returns to the borders of what would soon be the land of the people of God. When the Lord's challenge was offered to him in his old age, this stalwart of God gladly accepted it. Notice his words to Joshua, "Now therefore, give me this mountain, whereof the Lord spoke in that day; for thou heardest in that day how the Anakims were there, and that the cities were great and fenced; if so be the Lord will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the Lord said" (Joshua 14:12). Even in his twilight years Caleb still possessed a different spirit. He didn't complain or shirk the task at hand. For forty years, he dreamed of a day when he and God would drive out the heathen of the land. Our older members can take a lesson from this courageous warrior - there is no retirement from the Lord's army.

Caleb inherited what God had promised, and because his faith never wavered, the Lord allowed Caleb to possess all of the land he had scouted in his youth. "Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb...because he wholly followed the Lord God of Israel" (Joshua 14:14). While his world changed drastically following the people's refusal to go into the land, Caleb never faltered in his confidence in God's ability to fulfill what He had promised. Because of his great faith, Caleb was blessed. May we be stronger today because of the example left for us by Caleb.

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Seek Ye First...

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Our Purpose

The editors of *Seek Ye First* produce this biblical journal to provide scriptural material dealing with the issues that are currently affecting our families, our nation and the world. Our intent is to challenge souls to return to the "old paths" (Jeremiah 6:16) for their sole source of authority in religious matters. Our policy is to speak as the oracles of God (1 Peter 4:11), encouraging people to study to show themselves approved unto God, enabling them to rightly divide the word (2 Timothy 2:15). We make every effort to deal boldly with the issues that confront Christianity, with no apology, and strive to do so "speaking the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15).

NAAMAN'S ATTITUDES

Tom Moore

Proper attitudes are very important when it comes to dealing with God's word. Many are rejecting and misunderstanding God's word because their attitude is not right. Too many have an attitude of wanting to please self instead of pleasing God. The account of Naaman the leper will give us insight into the importance of a proper attitude we encounter God's word.

Naaman was the commander-in-chief of the Syrian king's army, and held a high place in the service of the king; and was afflicted with leprosy. In Naaman's house there was an Israelite maiden who served Naaman's wife. The Israelite maiden told her mistress that there was a prophet in Samaria that could heal Naaman of his leprosy. Naaman related this to the king of Syria, and the king sent Naaman to the king of Israel with a letter. When the king of Israel received the letter, and read that he was to cure Naaman - he tore his clothes in alarm, and exclaimed, "Am I God, to be able to kill and make alive?" (2 Kings 5:7).

"And it was so, when Elisha the man of God had heard that the king of Israel had rent his clothes, that he sent to the king, saying, Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel. So Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha. And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean" (2 Kings 5:8-10).

Naaman was not pleased (2 Kings 5:11), and was, perhaps, expecting some special ceremony. Naaman even complained about the river he was told to wash in (2 Kings 5:12). Notice the response of Naaman's servant, "If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?" (2 Kings 5:13). He said if the prophet had given you some difficult thing to do, wouldn't you have done it? Then why refuse to do something so easy? Naaman then followed the prophet's command and became clean - free of his leprosy (2 Kings 5:14).

Let us now to consider some of the different attitudes we find in this historical account of Naaman the leper.

THE "I THOUGHT" ATTITUDE (2 Kings 5:11) Naaman expected something different than what the prophet had given him. He thought something else would happen; therefore, he went away angry. He should have just been satisfied with the promise of being clean. Is this not the exact sentiment of many in the world today, when they are confronted with God's word? Many become angry when God's word does not match up with their wants. Many have the *I Think Attitude*: "I thought another answer would be given," or "I thought it would have been done another way." We need to be more concerned with what God thinks than what we think (Romans 11:33-36). Our thoughts are of no consequence when compared to the thoughts of God. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8-9).

THE “EXPECTING MORE THAN WAS GIVEN” ATTITUDE (2 Kings 5:11) Naaman was expecting some type of special ceremony – expecting something different, and became angry as a result. Many in the church today get mad and leave because they are not getting what they expected. Perhaps, they were expecting something more. Or, it could be that they were not getting what they want. Naaman thought that something greater would happen. But, what greater event could have occurred than his healing? That which was great was always there – but he overlooked it. Many today are expecting something greater out of religion; yet, all the while failing to see the greatness ever present: the greatness of the forgiveness of sins, the greatness of a home in heaven, and the greatness of Christian fellowship. If we are not getting enough out of our religion – it is clear that we are not putting enough into it.

THE “COMPLAIN ABOUT WHAT IS COMMANDED AND WOULD RATHER DO SOMETHING ELSE” ATTITUDE (2 Kings 5:12) Naaman complained about having to dip in that old, dirty Jordan River. He was told exactly what he needed to do to be healed of his horrible disease – and he complained about it! Can you imagine having leprosy and complaining about the cure? Most would have been willing to do anything to be cured! Today, many are complaining about the Lord’s cure for sin. Can you imagine someone complaining about avoiding eternal death? Many complain about the requirement of baptism, and would rather do something else – like “faith only.” Are we going to complain about God’s commands (Philippians 2:14)?

THE “CARING FRIEND” ATTITUDE (2 Kings 5:13) Naaman’s servant points out to him how ridiculous his attitude was. Naaman’s servant asks, “If the prophet would have told you some great thing to do, wouldn’t you have done it?” The servant says, “Why reject something so easy?” Naaman was lucky to have such a good friend! The world needs more good friends who will try to show others the error of their ways. Many times we get caught up in a situation and can see clearly. A good friend will help us to see clearly. “Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins” (James 5:19-20). Naaman’s servant saved him from certain death. A good friend will help us see more clearly. “I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul” (Psalm 142:4) – may this never be said of us!

THE “OBEDIENT” ATTITUDE (2 Kings 5:14) When Naaman finally realized how foolish he was, he obeyed Elisha’s commands. We need to put away our pride and big heads and obey God. Many are going through the motions, but are not really obeying God (1 Samuel 15:22-23). Our Lord asks, “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say” (Luke 6:46)? What will your answer be? Remember, “Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone” (James 2:17).

Our main lesson to be learned is: “A proper attitude is a **MUST** if we are going to be pleasing to God.” What kind of attitude do you have?

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Theme This Issue:

Learning from Old Testament Characters

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A JONAH IN GOD'S KINGDOM

Jeff Sweeten

God loves the sinner (John 3:16). He has expressed that love in the prediction, provision, and proclamation of His salvation at every opportunity and through every conceivable media. To be His child is to love the lost. Yet, Christians fail to finish their race for running in the wrong direction. Jonah is not the exception, but the rule. Ironically, in his book, all nature naturally obeyed the Almighty: the storm, the lots, the fish, the plant, the worm, and the east wind. Further, polytheistic pagans (the sailors and the people of Nineveh) recognized the need to obey the one true and living God. And, yet, a chosen child of the Jehovah of Israel, whose relationship should have evidenced informed loyalty, manifested his bitterness and rebellion by refusing his divinely directed responsibility. Oh, how relevant the lessons of Jonah are today!

God's challenge to express this divine love today is tendered through Jesus Christ, His Son. He challenges us: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15-16). This may seem overwhelming, conjuring up all sorts of fantastic failure scenarios, but no more so than how the original audience must have perceived it. Yet, the New Testament church grew in leaps and bounds because they "went every where preaching the word" (Acts 8:4). Our commission is to plant the seed and water it; God will give the increase (1 Corinthians 3:6). Why, like Jonah, do we deceive ourselves with distractions?

A common hindrance is the ignorant illusions of the hider (as though one can hide from God). How foolish Jonah must have perceived himself to be from the belly of the great fish. The very notion that what we think and do can be concealed from an omniscient God is preposterous. The Psalmist averred, "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee" (Psalm 139:7-12). From the darkness of a scaly prison, Jonah confesses, "Out of the belly of Sheol I cried, And You heard my voice" (Jonah 2:2b). God is everywhere. When we excuse ourselves from soul-saving work on the pretense of a busy schedule (James 4:14), lack of talent (2 Corinthians 12:9), or conflicting priorities (Matthew 6:33),

God sees and knows our failure in following His format. And, "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:14). We cannot hide from our responsibilities.

Perhaps blind prejudice prevents our preaching the Gospel. When we jump to judgment, and press fruit inspection to an x-ray extreme, we narrow the field unnecessarily. Only God knows the hearts of men and the degree of their receptivity (Acts 1:24). It is in His divine will that exposure to Revelation serve as the litmus test for the human heart, "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12). Without that message preached, a person is beyond the hope of eternal life. Paul taught clearly that our commission, as was Jonah's in his day, is essential to any sinner's knowledge of God. "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher" (Romans 10:14). Caste concerns and social pigeonholing should not be allowed to petrify personal preaching. When opportunities arise, we must rise to the challenge.

The amazing lesson of Jonah is in Nineveh's response. A reluctant minister was preaching, out of anything but love, a negative message of "gloom and doom;" and it was unconditionally and wholly received. And, why is that, you ask? It certainly had nothing to do with the minister's tone or demeanor, the most common complaint of stagnant saints longing for a good ear tickling (2 Timothy 4:3). Even Jonah's sorry, good-for-nothing attitude apparently had no bearing whatsoever on the Ninevite response. Further, the negative nature of the message (one that called for radical change) is hardly popular with creatures hard pressed leave the comforts and security of habit, no matter how perverse or horrific their behavior might be. Why did Nineveh respond? It must be in the power of God's Word. Our basic failure to reach out is the symptom of a sickly faith. We hear Paul confidently assert, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16), and we quote it for memory, but do we truly believe it? Unless we do, and act accordingly, we will be judged a Jonah in God's Kingdom.

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Guest Article...

THE CHARACTER OF NOAH

Glenn I. Hitchcock

Notice how Noah's character contrasts with the world he lived in. "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD. These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God" (Genesis 6:8-9). Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God. In the midst of this immoral society, Noah stood out. Notice what we read about him.

Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. This is the first time the word "grace" is used in the Bible and Noah did not earn God's blessing... he was given God's favor. Without grace Noah could not have been saved from the destruction of the world. God's grace benefited Noah. First, God revealed His intentions to Noah (6:13, 17). Second, God gave commands to Noah that, if he obeyed, would save him and his family (6:14-16). Third, God promised Noah salvation from the flood (6:18). The grace extended by God was not "cheap grace," but included hard work by man in obeying God. Also, careful attention to detail to what God had said and how He had said it was essential. We are living in a world where folks have disregarded God's details; such action is not the means of obtaining the grace of God. Further, the complete judgment of God against all that was evil and sinful is expressed. Noah trusted God. In so doing, Noah stood alone in grace and favor with God.

Noah was a just man. To be "just" means to live a righteous life and to treat others in a fair and just way, despite the circumstances. It means to be upright, honest, and virtuous, never to cheat or steal from others. Noah lived a just and moral life both before God and man. Noah's righteousness exceeded that of the people. "For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5: 20). Noah's mindset was to do only that which God wanted him to do. He allowed God's standards to effect and direct his life. Noah was unafraid to live differently from the status quo. What a lesson for Christians! The child of God is to live that holy and just life that is different from the world (1 John 2:15-17). The Christian life is a constant that is not robbed by circumstances. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain (Philippians 1:21).

Noah was a perfect man The Hebrew word for perfect is to be without blemish or to be blameless, to be moral, a person of purity, of integrity, of honesty; to be whole and complete. Not that he was sinless (9:24), but that there were

no blatant faults. He was a man of moral integrity among his generation. In that godless society, no one had any charges against Noah. We can conclude that he had a good relationship with his friends and neighbors. No one wondered if Noah was dealing honestly with them. They knew his ethics were solid. No one had to question whether Noah was cheating on his wife. They knew Noah's was committed to her. No one questioned Noah's methods. They knew he was not seeking to manipulate them. No one questioned Noah's sincerity. They may have questioned his sanity, but not his heart. Jesus expects His church to be perfect (blameless) when He delivers it to God the Father, "a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:27).

Noah walked with God. Noah's conduct and his walk of life are emphasized. The same thing was recorded about Enoch; it is the essential element we need. Noah's walk with God was threefold. First, it was a walk that continued individually. Second, it was a walk that persevered a family. Third, it was a walk in contrast to the disobedient world. The present generation could use a change of heart so we can walk with God instead of walking with the world. It requires a change of attitude. The imaginations and thoughts of the heart cannot be evil continually while yet we expect to walk in God's favor. We must have a walk of life that corresponds with our profession. Note that when the Christian walks with God, it is also a circumspective walk. "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light. Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:11-16). The circumspective walk of the child of God is about an awareness of one's surroundings. Christians should behave like Noah by walking with God through a very dark and dying world.

How can we find grace in the eyes of God? By being just, perfect, and walking with God. Character does matter with God! May we be encouraged by the example and life of Noah.

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O MY SON ABSALOM

Jeff Sweeten

One does not read far before the genesis of humanity's contrasting responses to God (Cain and Abel) are revealed. From a literal, historical Adam to a figurative, apocalyptic Apollyon, characters of the Bible are revered and revealed, sometimes in the same context. Each person's documented life is "written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Romans 15:4). So, even questionable characters, whose lives were less than stellar, still have lessons to teach us. Such is the case with Absalom.

During David's flight from King Saul, his political maneuvering compelled him to marry for convenience and linked him with the daughters of various city-state rulers, creating alliances beneficial to his nomadic existence. Absalom was the product of his third wife, Maacah the daughter of Talmai king of Geshur (2 Samuel 3:3). He must have been a beautiful baby and probably received the standard pampering of a child of the king, but what a child was this Absalom.

With the inevitable tensions generated by royal sons of different mothers, Absalom obsessed over the throne, and in opposition to even the meaning of his own name ("father of peace"), fomented rebellion in his father's kingdom. He was either patient or conniving (he waited two years to exact his vengeance on Ammon for raping his sister), but understood the most capable weapon in his arsenal to be good looks. "But in all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him...so Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel" (2 Samuel 14:25; 15:6).

Our culture extols youthful appearance, physical appeal, and peer popularity to the disregard of helpfulness, humility, and honor. Many of our choices, from political figures to the prom queen, have little to do with a credible character and more to do with physical perception. Absalom recognized his strengths and seized his opportunity with a usurper's vengeance. He became a royal disappointment, and the hard lessons of Absalom are at least three-fold.

First, it has been said that while beauty is only skin deep, ugly goes to the bone. A Christian recognizes the fleeting nature of human existence. "For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." (James 4:14). It is the inner person that matters to God, that "the hidden man of the heart, ... even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price" (1 Peter 3:4). In fact, our time is

more wisely invested in developing purity of soul instead of pumping iron, "for bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Timothy 4:8). Absalom could only see today.

Second, our market-driven economy may work financially, but a dog-eat-dog mentality is diametrically opposed to spirituality. Our concession that more is better has led one modern philosopher to quip: "He who dies with the most toys wins." How utterly sad! Obsessing over power and gain will reward with bitterness and disappointment. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (1 John 2:15-17). Absalom loved the world.

Third, no man is an island. Like a pebble in a pond, we impact those around us. The sad consequence of failed living is often more traumatic and more widely felt than we would like to admit. The embarrassment, the shame, and the disappointment seemed to bubble to the surface like evil brew in a cauldron as King David stooped in the chamber over the gate of ancient Mahanaim. A victory turned to mourning as a king reclaimed his throne, but at the horrid cost of a father's son. "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" (2 Samuel 18:33). The pain of sin is not exclusively the sinner's; others also suffer. This was Absalom's legacy.

The judgment will be a reckoning (Ecclesiastes 12:14). The gifts God has so bountifully bestowed will all be accounted for and we will stand responsible for their employ. In that Great Day, our greatest assets will not be our much-ballyhooed physical attributes, nor will we be rewarded for social status or public prestige. It will be the wise, merciful, and judicious benevolence of our divine blessings that mark the measure of our eternal reward. From sowing the seed to compassionate care, our service to a lost and dying world stands head and shoulders above any worldly formula for success. How good we look, how many toys we have, or how adept we become to engender envy will amount to nothing in eternity. Absalom's lost cause serves as a great lesson for the conquest-crazed society in which we live, and how well we learn these lessons will be reflected in our choices.

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ABIGAIL-OVERCOMING MARRIAGE TO A FOOL

Michael Light

One of the most intriguing women in the Bible is a lady named Abigail. This woman's excellent character is first revealed to us in 1 Samuel 25. After the death of the great prophet Samuel (vs. 1), David and his men moved into the wilderness of Paran. While in this region David became aware of a man named Nabal. This man was extremely rich. His possessions included three thousand sheep and a thousand goats. David and his men were in need of food. He sent some messengers to Nabal to ask for help. David had them remind him that they had been careful not to take any of his stock and that they had protected him from all dangers (vs. 6-9).

Abigail was unfortunately married to Nabal. We are not told how the marriage came to be. It might have been an arranged marriage, it might have been for love, we simply don't know. What we do know is that she was a wise and discerning woman, while Nabal was a churlish (vs. 3) and foolish man. In fact, it is fair to say that he was a hard-headed, belligerent male with little or no understanding. Not only did Nabal fail to render aid to David, he insulted this future king of Israel and sent his men back empty-handed.

As soon as Abigail heard of her husband's insulting behavior toward David she began to make preparations to make up for his foolish actions. She and her servants prepared a large amount of food and drink and traveled to where David and his six hundred men were. This was a good decision on her part, for David was moving into position to destroy Nabal and all of his family and servants.

It took a great deal of courage on her part to approach David. He was known as a man of war, he had been insulted by her husband, he had every reason in the world to bring harm to her and her servants. She could have reasoned within herself, "Nabal made this mess, let him fix it," but she did not. It was not her fault that trouble was coming her way, and yet she simply faced the problem head on.

Abigail sought David's good. Surely Abigail knew there was something special about David. Perhaps, she had heard of his exploits in battle; in fact, she may have even been aware that he would be the next king. Her actions and her words indicate a desire to see only good come to him.

Many a woman would have defended their husband regardless, but she didn't. She knew he was a fool, she knew he was wrong, and she freely admitted it. Not only did she admit it, she was determined to undo his evil deeds even though she knew he would be furious for her doing so.

Abigail was quite cunning When she approached David she

was very humble. She and her servants bowed themselves before him. She freely admitted her husband's mistake and appealed to David's sense of justice. She basically said, "we know you will not punish the innocent for the mistakes of another." She then mentioned to David that it is better to let God bring retribution against Nabal than to stoop to vengeance. This appeal to David's ego, and his sense of right and wrong had the desired effect. He decided not to destroy all of the house of Nabal, and left the man's punishment in the hands of God.

When Abigail returned from the exchange with David she found her husband drunk and boisterous. The next day she informed him of all she had done and how David's wrath was abated. When Nabal heard the news we are told that his heart died within him and he became as stone. A short ten days later God smote Nabal and he died. After David heard of Nabal's death he blessed God for bringing justice to the situation. Later David and Abigail were married. Her wise dealings with David saved the lives of many of her servants, and in time, helped make her the wife of the king of Israel.

Some of the lessons we can learn from Abigail follow. The writer of Proverbs wrote, "a soft answer turneth away wrath." Abigail knew this and practiced it years before it was written into the Holy Text. This wife was willing to put what was right above her own family. "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword ... He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me" (cf. Matthew 10:34-38). She also practiced the "golden rule." "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them" (Matthew 7:12). She did for David and his men what she would have liked to have done for herself. Abigail trusted in the Lord's ability to save and to render unto all men according to what is right (2 Corinthians 5:10). God's providence worked in her life. He delivered her from the hand of a foolish and brutal man into the family of the greatest king the children of Israel ever had.

We need to have these same attributes. She was wise, patient, industrious and trusting in the grace of God Almighty. She refused to be locked into doing wrong because of the poor choices of another. May we ever draw strength from her example.

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