

PROPHETS & JUDGES

IN THE PROMISED LAND

“Human theories and speculations will never lead to an understanding to God’s word. Those who suppose that they understand philosophy think that their explanations are necessary to unlock the treasures of knowledge and to prevent heresies from coming into the church. But it is these explanations that have brought in false theories and heresies. Men have made desperate efforts to explain what they thought to be intricate scriptures; but too often their efforts have only darkened that which they tried to make clear.” {Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 110}

WEEK 24 - PEACEMAKERS

I. David and Saul at En-gedi

1. God had promised to deliver King Saul into David’s hand, to do to him whatever seemed good to David. How did David’s men react to the opportunity, and what did David do?

2. What did this show about David? What about Saul made this temptation all the easier to justify?

3. How did Saul feel when he realized David had spared his life?

4. What lesson can we learn for today from the enmity of Saul toward David?

II. The Death of Samuel

1. What was singular (unique) about Samuel and Eli?

2. What lesson can we learn from this?

3. What burdened Samuel with grief and sadness in his last days?

4. What could Samuel have done to prevent this?

5. Saul was gifted with an above-average mind. What made Saul an even greater curse to the world?

III. The Work of a Peace-Maker

1. How did Abigail speak to David?

2. How should we feel when we are rebuked?

3. David had actually taken a solemn oath to God that Nabal and his house should die. Was it his responsibility to fulfill that oath?

4. How did God deal with Nabal, and what does this teach us?

5. David became a polygamist. Was that OK?

David and Saul at En-gedi**October 12, 1888**

“And David saw that Saul was come out to seek his life; and David was in the wilderness of Ziph in a wood.” Satan was constantly at work to destroy the anointed of the Lord; but the Lord worked to disappoint the enemy, and to preserve David and his men. And now, when bright and cheering spots were few in the experience of the son of Jesse, he was surprised and rejoiced to receive a visit from Jonathan, who had learned the place of his refuge. How precious were the moments that these two friends passed in each other’s society. They related their varied experiences, and Jonathan strengthened the heart and confidence of David, saying, “Fear not; for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee; and thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee; and that also Saul my father knoweth.” As they talked of the wonderful dealings of God toward David, the oppressed and hunted fugitive was greatly encouraged. “And they two made a covenant before the Lord; and David abode in the wood, and Jonathan went to his house.” ^[1.1]

After the visit of Jonathan, David encouraged his soul with songs of praise, accompanying his voice with his harp as he sang, “In the Lord put I my trust; how say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain? for lo, the wicked bend their bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string, that they may privily shoot at the upright in heart. If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do? The Lord is in his holy temple, the Lord’s throne is in Heaven; his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men. The Lord trieth the righteous; but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth.” ^[1.2]

The Ziphites, into whose wild regions David went from Keilah, sent word to Saul in Gibeah that they knew where David was hiding, and that they would guide the king to his retreat. “Now therefore, O king, come down according to all the desire of thy soul to come down; and our part shall be to deliver him into the king’s hand.” Saul, who had recently been uttering blasphemous curses, now said, “Blessed be ye of the Lord; for ye have compassion on me.” The king pronounced a blessing upon the wicked betrayers of David; but of what advantage were praise and flattery from such lips? ^[1.3]

A new company was prepared and sent out to hunt for the Lord’s anointed, and Saul gave a special charge to the wicked Ziphites: “Go, I pray you, prepare yet, and know and see his place where his haunt is, and who hath seen him there; for it is told me that he dealeth very subtilly. See therefore, and take knowledge of all the lurking places where he hideth himself, and come ye again to me with the certainty, and I will go with you; and it shall come to pass, if he be in the land, that I will search him out throughout all the thousands of Judah.” ^[1.4]

The citizens of Keilah, who should have repaid the interest and zeal of David in delivering them from the hands of the Philistines, would have given him up because of their fear of Saul rather than to have suffered a siege for his sake. But the men of Ziph would do worse; they would betray David into the hands of his enemy, not because of their loyalty to the king, but because of their hatred of David. Their interest for the king was only a pretense. They were of their own accord acting the part of hypocrites when they offered to assist in the capture

of David. It was upon these false-hearted betrayers that Saul invoked the blessing of the Lord. He praised their Satanic spirit in betraying an innocent man, as the spirit and act of virtue in showing compassion to himself. Apparently David was in greater danger than he had ever been before. Upon learning the perils to which he was exposed, he changed his position, seeking refuge in the mountains between Maon and the Dead Sea. {1.5}

Saul and his men had planned well, and they felt that success was already assured. But when the enemies of David flattered themselves that there could be no escape, there came a messenger unto Saul, saying, "Haste thee, and come; for the Philistines have invaded the land. Wherefore Saul returned from pursuing after David, and went against the Philistines." {1.6}

The disappointed king was in a frenzy of anger to be thus cheated of his prey; but he feared the dissatisfaction of the nation; for, if the Philistines should ravage the country while he was destroying its defender, a reaction would be likely to take place, and he would become the object of the people's hate. So he relinquished his pursuit of David, and went against the Philistines, and this gave David an opportunity to escape to the stronghold of En-gedi. {1.7}

As soon as the encounter with the Philistines was over, word was again sent to Saul, "Behold, David is in the wilderness of En-gedi. Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and went to seek David and his men upon the rocks of the wild goats." David had only six hundred men in his company, while Saul advanced against him with an army of three thousand. In a secluded cave the son of Jesse and his men waited for the guidance of God as to what should be done. As Saul was pressing his way up the mountains, he turned aside, and lay down to rest in the entrance of the very cavern where David and his company were hidden. When his men saw this, they urged their leader to kill Saul as he slept. The fact that the king was now in their power, was interpreted by them as a certain evidence that God himself had delivered the enemy into their hand that they might destroy this relentless foe, who without cause was continually seeking the life of David. David was tempted to take this view of the matter; but the voice of conscience spoke to him, saying, "Touch not the anointed of the Lord," and he could but yield obedience. His men were impatient that David hesitated to grant the permission they so much desired; but he firmly restrained them from doing any harm to Saul. {1.8}

The course of David made it manifest that he had a Ruler whom he obeyed. He could not permit his natural passions to gain the victory over him; for he knew that he that ruleth his own spirit, is greater than he who taketh a city. If he had been led and controlled by human feelings, he would have reasoned that the Lord had brought his enemy under his power in order that he might slay him, and take the government of Israel upon himself. Saul's mind was in such a condition that his authority was not respected, and the people were becoming irreligious and demoralized. Yet the fact that Saul had been divinely chosen king of Israel kept him in safety, for David conscientiously served God, and he would not in any wise harm the anointed of the Lord. {1.9}

David's men could scarcely consent to leave Saul in peace, and they said to their commander, "Behold the day of which the Lord said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee. Then David arose, and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe privily." But his tender conscience smote him afterward, because he had marred the garment of the king. {1.10}

Saul rose up and went out of the cave to continue his search after David. But a voice fell upon his startled ears, saying, "My lord the king." He turned to see who was addressing him, and lo! it was the son of Jesse, the man whom he had so long desired to have in his power that he might kill him. David bowed himself to the king, acknowledging him as his master. David addressed Saul in these words: "Wherefore hearest thou men's words, saying, Behold, David seeketh thy hurt? Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how that the Lord had delivered thee today into mine hand in the cave; and some bade me kill thee; but mine eye spared thee; and I said, I will not put forth mine hand against my lord; for he is the Lord's anointed. Moreover, my father, see, yea, see the skirt of thy robe in my hand; for in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe, and killed thee not, know thou and see that there is neither evil nor transgression in mine hand, and I have not sinned against thee; yet thou huntest my soul to take it. The Lord judge between me and thee, and the Lord avenge me of thee; but mine hand shall not be upon thee." {1.11}

Saul was both astonished and humbled as he heard the statements of David, and admitted their truthfulness. His feelings were greatly stirred as he realized that he had been so fully in the power of the man whom he had injured. He saw David standing before him in conscious innocence, and yet he had charged him with plotting against his life, and had pursued him with relentless hate to destroy him. He was deeply agitated as David presented the skirt of his robe as unmistakable evidence to the king that his accusations had been without foundation. Here was proof that David was not seeking the life of the king. Then David presented the course of Saul in its true, undignified, and ungenerous light, and Saul exclaimed with trembling lip and softened spirit, "Is this thy voice, my son David? And Saul lifted up his voice, and wept." Then he declared to David. "Thou art more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil. . . . For if a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away? wherefore the Lord reward thee good for that thou hast done unto me this day. And now, behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thine hand." And David made a covenant with Saul that when this should take place he would favorably regard the house of Saul, and not cut off his name. {1.12}

David had no reason to put confidence in the assurances of Saul, or to deem that his penitent condition would be permanent: He knew that his feelings would change, and that the king would be more thoroughly intent than ever upon taking his life. So when Saul returned to his home, David remained in the strongholds of the mountains. {1.13}

The enmity that is cherished toward the servants of God by those who have yielded to the power of Satan, changes at times to a feeling of favor and approbation; but this is not always an evidence that the change is a lasting one. The enemies of righteousness have been moved by a power from beneath to accuse and stigmatize those whom God has chosen to do his work. False impressions have been made through false statements; but after evil-minded men have engaged in doing and saying many wicked things, the conviction that they have been in the wrong takes deep hold upon their minds. The Spirit of the Lord strives with them, and they humble their hearts before God, and before those whose influence they have sought to destroy, and they change their course toward them. But as they again open the door to the suggestions of the evil one, the old doubts are revived. The old enmity is awakened, and they return to engage in the same work which they repented of, and for a time abandoned. Again they speak evil, accusing and condemning in the bitterest manner the very ones to whom they made most humble confession. Satan can use such souls with far greater power after such a course has been pursued than he could before, because they have sinned against greater light. ^[1.14]

The history of Saul is a lesson to all who would walk in the counsel of God. They should take warning from his proud and rebellious spirit, and learn to walk with humility before Heaven, placing their whole dependence upon God. Many have apostatized who have once been zealous advocates of the truth, and whose faith and teaching have been published throughout the world, verifying the words of Paul when he declares, "In the latter times some shall depart from the faith." ^[1.15]

The Death of Samuel

October 19, 1888

"And Samuel died; and all the Israelites were gathered together, and lamented him, and buried him in his house at Ramah." The death of Samuel was regarded as an irreparable loss by the nation of Israel. A great and good prophet and an eminent judge had fallen in death; and the grief of the people was deep and heart-felt. ^[2.1]

The life of Samuel from early childhood had been a life of piety and devotion. He had been placed under the care of Eli in his youth, and the loveliness of his character drew forth the warm affection of the aged priest. He was kind, generous, diligent, obedient, and respectful. The contrast between the course of the youth Samuel and that of the priest's own sons was very marked, and Eli found rest and comfort and blessing in the presence of his charge. It was a singular thing that between Eli, the chief magistrate of the nation, and the simple child so warm a friendship should exist. Samuel was helpful and affectionate, and no father ever loved his child more tenderly than did Eli this youth. As the infirmities of age came upon Eli, he felt more keenly the disheartening, reckless, profligate course of his own sons, and he turned to Samuel for comfort and support. ^[2.2]

How touching to see youth and old age relying one upon the other, the youth looking up to the aged for counsel and wisdom, the aged looking to the youth

for help and sympathy. This is as it should be. God would have the young possess such qualifications of character that they shall find delight in the friendship of the old, that they may be united in the endearing bonds of affection to those who are approaching the borders of the grave. {2.3}

From his youth up, Samuel had walked before Israel in the integrity of his heart; but he was no longer to go in and out before his people. Although Saul had been the acknowledged king of Israel, Samuel had wielded a more powerful influence than he, because his record was one of faithfulness, obedience, and devotion. We read that he judged Israel all the days of his life. The closing years of the prophet could not but be years of sadness and burden of soul. His own children had not followed the example which he had given them. They had not heeded the precepts which he had sought to impress upon their minds. They had not copied the elevated, pure, unselfish life of their father. Through their impious and selfish life they had forfeited the confidence of the people, and this was a cause of great grief to Samuel. He had been to some extent too easy and indulgent with his sons, and the result that is usually seen where this is the case, was made apparent in his family. The characters of his children were marred with selfishness, and their course was such that it made them a dishonor to the cause of God. If the warning given to Eli had exerted the influence upon the mind of Samuel that it should have done, it would have aided him in the government of his household. {2.4}

The Lord said of Abraham, "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him." If Samuel had been like Abraham, and had commanded his children after him, how different would have been the moulding of the lives of his children. Their characters were fashioned after the sight of their eyes and the hearing of their ears. The associations which they chose, the company which they kept, left an impress upon their minds; and reverence for God and sacred things was weakened. {2.5}

The aged prophet had loved Saul with intense affection; but before he died, he saw the scepter dishonored in the hand of him whom he had anointed in the name of the Lord to rule Israel. He saw him as one who could not rule himself, much less a nation. With some consolation he recalled the fact that he had anointed the son of a shepherd in Bethlehem as the future king, and he looked forward to David's reign as the time when Israel would revive. The bright and morning Star was to come of the seed of David, and his throne was to be established forever. {2.6}

After Israel had rejected Samuel as ruler of the nation, though well qualified for public labor, the prophet sought retirement. He was not superannuated, for he presided as teacher in the school of the prophets. This service for his God was a pleasant service. David's connection with Samuel during his stay at Naioth aroused the jealousy of Saul lest he who was revered as a prophet of God throughout all Israel, should lend his influence to the advancement of his rival. As the character and management of Saul were viewed in contrast to the char-

acter and management of Samuel, Israel saw what a mistake they had made in desiring a king, that they might not be different from the nations around them. The people looked with alarm at the condition of society, fast becoming leavened with irreligion and godlessness. The influence and example of their ruler was leaving its impression on all sides, and well might Israel mourn that Samuel, the prophet of the Lord, was dead. {2.7}

The nation had lost the founder and president of their college, but that was not all. They had lost him to whom they had been accustomed to go with their great troubles. They had lost one who had constantly interceded with God in their behalf. Israel had felt more secure while the prayers of this good man ascended to Heaven for them; for “the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” They felt now that they were being forsaken of God. The king seemed little less than a madman. He was abandoned of God; but he was not filled with godly sorrow for the evil course he had pursued. He was remorseful, passionate, and unable to exercise reason. The Lord had declared by the lips of Samuel the condition of the disobedient: “Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.” These words found their verification in the life of Saul. The uncontrolled passions of his wicked heart made him unfit to receive counsel or advice. He refused all instruction, and acted as if possessed of a demon. Justice was perverted to cruelty, and order was turned into confusion. Oh, that Saul had humbled his proud heart before God! But anger rests in the bosom of fools, transforming those who have been made in the image of God, into the image of the evil one. {2.8}

Saul had a mind and influence capable of governing a kingdom, if his powers had been submitted to the control of God, but the very endowments that qualified him for doing good could be used by Satan, when surrendered to his power, and would enable him to exert widespread influence for evil. He could be more sternly vindictive, more injurious and determined in prosecuting his unholy designs, than could others, because of the superior powers of mind and heart that had been given him of God. He had ruined his own soul, and had wrought the ruin of his house; but he was impenitent and hardened. He had brought injury and disgrace upon himself, and yet he desired that David when he should come to the throne, should preserve his house and honor his name. But his very course in pursuing his successor from place to place, and of proclaiming him an outlaw and a rebel, brought infamy upon the name he desired to have honored. {2.9}

It was while Israel was racked with perplexity and internal strife, at a time when it seemed that the calm, God-fearing counsel of Samuel was most needed, that God gave his aged servant rest. Oh, how bitter were the reflections of Israel as they looked upon his quiet resting-place, and remembered their folly in rejecting him as their ruler; for he had had so close a connection with Heaven that he seemed to bind all Israel to the throne of Jehovah. It was Samuel who had taught them to love and obey God; but now that he was dead, the people felt that they were to be left to the mercies of a king who was joined to Satan, and who would divorce the people from God and Heaven. {2.10}

David could not be present at the funeral of Samuel; but he mourned for him as deeply and tenderly as a faithful son could have mourned for a devoted father. He knew that his death had broken another bond of restraint from the spirit and actions of Saul, and he felt less secure than while the prophet lived. While the attention of Saul was engaged in mourning for the death of Samuel, David thought it necessary to seek for a place of greater security; so he fled to the wilderness of Paran. It was here that he composed the one hundred and twentieth and twenty-first psalms. In the desolate wilds of the wilderness, realizing that the prophet was dead, and the king was his enemy, he sang: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved; he that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. . . . The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil; he shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even forevermore." {2.11}

The Work of a Peace-Maker

October 26, 1888

While David and his men were in the Wilderness of Paran, they protected from the depredations of marauders the flocks and herds of a very wealthy man named Nabal, who had vast possessions in Carmel. Nabal was a descendant of Caleb, but his character was churlish and niggardly. {3.1}

David and his men were in sore need of provisions while at this place, and when the son of Jesse heard that Nabal was shearing his sheep he sent out ten young men, and David said unto the young men, "Get you up to Carmel, and go to Nabal, and greet him in my name; and thus shall ye say to him that liveth in prosperity, Peace be both to thee, and peace be to thine house, and peace be unto all that thou hast. And now I have heard that thou hast shearers; now thy shepherds which were with us, we hurt them not, neither was there aught missing unto them, all the while they were in Carmel. Ask thy young men, and they will show thee. Wherefore let the young men find favor in thine eyes; for we come in a good day; give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to thine hand unto thy servants, and to thy son David." {3.2}

David and his men had been like a wall of protection to the shepherds and flocks of Nabal as they pastured in the mountains. And he courteously petitioned that supplies be given them in their great need from the abundance of this rich man. They might have helped themselves from the flocks and herds; but they did not. They behaved themselves in an honest way; but their kindness was all lost upon Nabal. The answer he returned to David was indicative of his character. "And Nabal answered David's servants, and said, Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse? there be many servants nowadays that break away every man from his master. 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?" When the young men returned empty-handed, disappointed and disgusted, and related the affair to David, he was filled with indignation. "Surely," he said, "in vain have I kept all that this fellow hath in the wilderness, so that nothing

was missed of all that pertained unto him; and he has requited me evil for good.” David commanded his men to gird on their swords, and equip themselves for an encounter; for he had determined to punish the man who had denied him what was his right, and had added insult to injury. This impulsive movement was more in harmony with the manner of Saul than with that of David, but the son of Jesse had yet to learn lessons of patience in the school of affliction. {3.3}

One of the servants of Nabal hastened to Abigail, the wife of Nabal, after he had dismissed David’s young men, and told her what had happened. “Behold, David sent messengers out of the wilderness to salute our master; and he railed on them. But the men were very good unto us, and we were not hurt, neither missed we anything, as long as we were conversant with them, when we were in the fields. They were a wall unto us both by night and day, all the while we were with them keeping the sheep. Now therefore know and consider what thou wilt do; for evil is determined against our master, and against all his household.” {3.4}

Without consulting her husband, or telling him of her intention, Abigail made up an ample supply of provisions, and started out to meet the army of David. She met them in a covert of a hill. “And when Abigail saw David, she hastened, and lighted off the ass, and fell before David on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and fell at his feet, and said, Upon me, my lord, upon me let this iniquity be; and let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak in thine audience.” Abigail addressed David with as much reverence as though speaking to a crowned monarch. Nabal had scornfully inquired, “Who is David?” but Abigail called him, “My Lord.” With kind words she sought to soothe his irritated feelings. She did not reproach him for his hasty action, for she felt assured that a little time and reflection would work a change in his purpose, and that his conscience itself would condemn the violent measure which he was about to take. She pleaded with David in behalf of her husband. With utter unselfishness of spirit, she desired him to impute the whole blame of the matter to her, and not to charge it to her poor, deluded husband, who knew not what was for his own good or happiness. What a spirit is this! With nothing of ostentation or pride, but full of the wisdom and love of God, Abigail revealed the strength of her devotion to her household. Whatever was her husband’s disposition, he was her husband still, and she made it plain to the indignant captain that the unkind course of her husband was in nowise premeditated against him as a personal affront; but it was simply the outburst of an unhappy and selfish nature. Nabal was naturally unreasonable and abusive, and when aroused he knew not what he said or did. {3.5}

“Now therefore, my lord, as the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, seeing the Lord hath withholden 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,” Abigail did not take to herself the credit of this reasoning to swerve David from his hasty purpose, but gave to God the honor and the praise. She then offered her rich provision as a peace-offering to the young men of David, and still pleaded as if she herself were the guilty party who had so stirred the indignation of David. “I pray thee, forgive the trespass of thine handmaid; 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." Abigail presented by implication the course which David should pursue. He should fight the battles of the Lord. He was not to seek revenge for personal wrongs, even though persecuted as a traitor. She continued: "Yet a man is risen to pursue thee, and to seek thy soul; but the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the Lord thy God; . . . and it shall come to pass, when the Lord shall have done to my lord according to all the good that he has spoken concerning thee, and shall have appointed thee ruler over Israel; that this shall be no grief unto thee, nor offense of heart unto my lord, neither that thou hath shed blood causeless, or that my lord hath avenged himself; but when the Lord shall have dealt well with my lord, then remember thine handmaid." {3.6}

These words could only have come from the lips of one who had partaken of that wisdom which cometh down from above. The piety of Abigail, like the fragrance of a flower, breathed out all unconsciously in face and word and action. The Spirit of the Son of God was abiding in her soul. Her heart was full of purity, gentleness, and sanctified love. Her speech, seasoned with grace, and full of kindness and peace, shed a heavenly influence. Better impulses came to David, and he trembled as he thought what might have been the consequences of his rash purpose. An entire household would have been slain, containing more than one precious, God-fearing person like Abigail, who had engaged in the blessed ministry of good. Her words healed the sore and bruised heart of David. Would that there were more women who would soothe the irritated feelings, prevent rash impulses, and quell great evils by words of calm and well-directed wisdom. "Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God." {3.7}

A consecrated Christian life is ever shedding light and comfort and peace. It is purity, tact, simplicity, and usefulness. It is controlled by that unselfish love that sanctifies the influence. It is full of Christ, and leaves a track of light wherever its possessor may go. Abigail was a wise reprover and counselor. David's passion died away under the power of her influence and reasoning. He was convinced that he had taken an unwise course, and had lost control of his own Spirit. He received the rebuke with humility of heart, in harmony with his own words, "Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil." He gave thanks and blessing because she advised him righteously. {3.8}

There are many who, when they are reproved or advised, think it praiseworthy if they receive the rebuke without becoming impatient. But how few take reproof with gratitude of heart, and bless those who seek to save them from pursuing an evil course. {3.9}

Abigail rejoiced that her mission had been successful, and that she had been instrumental in saving her household from death. David rejoiced that through her timely advice he had been prevented from committing deeds of violence and revenge. Upon reflection, he realized that it would have been a matter of disgrace to him before Israel, and a remembrance that would always have caused him the keenest remorse. He felt that he and his men had the greatest cause for gratitude.

He had had a horror of bloodshed, and had prayed that he might be delivered from blood guiltiness; and yet, when his feelings were injured, he had planned to avenge himself with his own hands. In this he had taken it upon himself to act in the place of God, who has said, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay." [3.10]

David had taken an oath that Nabal and his household should perish; but now he saw that it was not only wrong to make such a vow, but it would be wrong to keep it. If Herod had had the moral courage of David, no matter how humiliating it might have been, he would have retracted the oath that devoted John the Baptist's head to the ax of the executioner, that the revenge of an evil woman might be accomplished, and he would not have had upon his soul the guilt of the murder of the prophet of God. [3.11]

When Abigail returned to her home, she found her husband and his guests participating in the enjoyment of a great feast. Nabal thought nothing of spending an extravagant amount of his wealth to indulge and glorify himself; but it seemed too painful a sacrifice for him to make to bestow compensation which he never would have missed, upon those who had been like a wall to his flocks and herds. Nabal was like the rich man in the parable. He had only one thought—to use God's merciful gifts to gratify his selfish animal appetites. He had no thought of gratitude to the giver. He was not rich toward God; for eternal treasure had no attraction for him. Present luxury, present gain, was the one absorbing thought of his life. This was his God. [3.12]

Abigail found her husband in a state of intoxication, joining in the drunken revelry of those around him. She knew it would be useless to tell him of what had happened when his reason was dethroned; but the next morning she related to him the occurrence of the day before. Nabal was a coward at heart, and his excessive indulgence of appetite, both in eating and drinking, had affected his physical and moral powers, and when he had realized how near his folly had brought him to a sudden death, his entire energy and power seemed smitten with paralysis. Fearful that David would still pursue his purpose of revenge, he was filled with horror, and sank down in a condition of helpless insensibility. After ten days Nabal died. The life that God had given him had only been a curse to society. In the midst of his rejoicing and merry-making, God had said to him, as he said to the rich fool of the parable, "This night thy soul shall be required of thee." [3.13]

When David heard the tidings of the death of Nabal, he gave thanks that God had taken vengeance into his own hands. He had been restrained from evil, and the Lord had returned the wickedness of the wicked upon his own head. In this dealing of God with Nabal and David, men may be encouraged to put their cases into the hands of God; for in his own good time he will set matters right.

[3.14]

David afterward married Abigail. This was not according to the original plan of God; it was in direct opposition to his design, that a man should have more than one wife. David was already the husband of Ahinoam. The gospel condemns the practice of polygamy. The custom of the nations of David's time had perverted his judgment and influenced his actions. Great men have erred greatly

in following the practices of the world. The study of everyone should be to know what is the will of God and what saith the word of the Lord. The bitter result of this practice of marrying many wives was permitted to be sorely felt throughout all the life of David. {3.15}

Answer Hints

Section 1: | 1) 1.8 | 2) 1.9 | 3) 1.12 | 4) 1.14, 1.15 |

Section 2: | 1) 2.2 | 2) 2.3 | 3) 2.4 | 4) 2.4, 2.5 | 5) 2.9 |

Section 3: | 1) 3.5 | 2) 3.9 | 3) 3.11 | 4) 3.14 | 5) 3.15 |

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