

“By faith . . .”

Abigail

Elfriede Ransome

THE STORY of Abigail in 1 Samuel 25 has a number of lessons for us. We are not told how she, a beautiful and discreet woman, came to be married to an evil, churlish fool, as Nabal was. However, here we have folly and discretion yoked together in marriage: “they twain shall be one” (Mt. 19:5). We all have these two sides to our characters—the flesh which is foolishness with God and the spirit which is at odds with the flesh—and we struggle to let the spirit prevail.

Nabal had rejected David the Beloved, but Abigail implored David not to regard this man of Belial, Nabal (1 Sam. 25:25). She acknowledged the sin: “upon me let this iniquity be” (v. 24); “I pray thee, forgive the trespass of thine handmaid” (v. 28). We must confess our sins and ask forgiveness before we can be reconciled to the Lord.

Abigail knew what God had already promised to David: “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 . . . the souls of thine enemies, them shall He sling out, as out of the middle of a sling . . . when the LORD shall have done to my lord according to all the good that He hath spoken concerning thee, and shall have appointed thee ruler over Israel . . . then remember thine handmaid” (vv. 28-31). We also must know and have faith in God’s promises and look for the Kingdom, when we wish to be remembered for good by our Lord.

Abigail kept David from avenging (Heb. saving) himself, just as Jesus did not avenge himself but let his Father save him out of death. David and his men had cared for Nabal’s flocks when they were together, just as Jesus declared himself to be the good shepherd of the sheep. Jesus also fought the battles of the Lord, no evil was found in him all his days, and God will put all enemies under his feet (1 Cor. 15:25).

Abigail brought David gifts, just as we must produce fruit that pleases the Lord: “So David received of her hand that which she had brought him, and said unto her, Go up in peace to thine house; see, I have hearkened to thy voice, and

have accepted thy person” (1 Sam. 25:35). These are words that we desire to hear. When Abigail related to Nabal all that had occurred, “his heart died within him, and he became as a stone. And . . . about ten days after . . . the LORD smote Nabal, that he died” (vv. 37,38). When we have accepted the Truth we must try to put the flesh to death, else we will not be “lively stones” fit for the temple of our God (1 Pet. 2:5).

When David heard of Nabal’s death he sent messengers (the same word in Hebrew as that for angels) to take Abigail to him to wife. Her response was: “Behold, let thine handmaid be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord. And Abigail hastened, and arose, and rode upon an ass, with five damsels of hers that went after her; and she went after the messengers of David, and became his wife” (vv. 41,42).

When Jesus called Peter and Andrew to follow him, “they straightway left their nets, and followed him” (Mt. 4:20). We must not be like the rich young man who “went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions” (19:22). We need to take the example of Abigail to heart and hurry to go to our Lord, even as did the five wise virgins in the parable, who, having oil in their lamps, lit them, and when the bridegroom came “were ready [and] went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut” (25:10). Jesus also showed that we must be prepared to wash the feet in service to our brethren and sisters.

Abigail bore David a son, Chileab (2 Sam. 3:3), the name being thought to mean ‘Restraint of his father’ (Strong’s 3607), thus commemorating the way Abigail had restrained David from avenging himself. The son is called Daniel in 1 Chronicles 3:1, meaning ‘God is judge’, reflecting the way God had judged Nabal. This narrative shows us Abigail’s faith in God’s word, that what He had said He would surely perform.

The name Abigail means ‘Source of delight’. We also must renounce ‘Nabal (Folly)’ and be a source of delight to our Lord, serving our fellow-servants and ready to follow as soon as we are called. Then we will be accepted by the Lord, with our acknowledged sins forgiven, and become a part of that multitudinous Bride of Christ.