WIDOWS OF THE BIBLE

ABIGAIL: LESSON FIFTEEN

by Sandy Harber

"Now David had said, Surely in vain have I kept all that this fellow hath in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that pertained unto him...."   I Sam. 25:21a

The Bible narrative gives us a flashback to David's reaction to the report his men brought him. David had protected Nabal's animals and servants from thieves and poachers. No one had asked him to do this. He did it because he had once been a shepherd himself. He knew the dangers confronting the flock and the servants who keep them. David had a kind heart. It was within his power to help shepherds while his army was camping nearby. It was a good deed. He probably never thought about being repaid for his kindness.

Have you ever been prompted by the Holy Spirit to perform a good deed or say something kind to a stranger? You weren't looking for praise or something in return. A polite "thank you" is often all we need. Or seeing a smile on the stranger's face is reward enough. It engenders a feeling of satisfaction down deep in your soul.

Having been a shepherd himself, David knew there would be celebrating and feasting when the shearing was completed. His men had earned a share in the festivities. David would leave it up to Nabal to determine how much to reward the soldiers. David expected Nabal to appreciate the good turn his men had rendered. He believed the owner of the flock would value the soldiers' service. He trusted in the good nature of the man. But David had never met Nabal.

The soldiers' report set him straight. Now David understood the nature of the man he had been protecting. And he didn't like it. Nabal was arrogant and ungrateful. He had insulted David personally and rejected the warriors who followed him.

David said angrily that he had protected Nabal's possessions for nothing. He wasn't looking for reimbursement but a little gratitude would be nice. He was so angry that he spoke in broad terms without thinking.

We all do that. We make all-encompassing, sweeping statements like "nothing ever goes right for me!" Is that true? Of course not. Sometimes things go wrong in our lives, but other times they go right. David's protection of Nabal's assets included the lives of the sheep and the men who watched them. Was it nothing that some of Nabal's servants would probably have been injured or killed at the hands of poachers and marauders? Certainly the lives of many sheep were spared. The families of the servants would have been affected by the injury or loss of a husband, son, or brother. David's kindness in protecting Nabal's possessions was not for nothing. His kindness did a great deal of good. Maybe Nabal was ungrateful but the servants were not.

When we get angry we often over-react. We express ourselves in hyperbole. We want to retaliate, get even, and hurt the other guy like we've been hurt. Usually when we feel like this we fume helplessly for a while but nothing ever comes from it. We, however, do not have an army of 600 seasoned soldiers at our command. David did.

The Bible warns that "to whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required" (Lk. 12:48). David knew God intimately. His Psalms display great knowledge of God's Person and power. He knew that

using his army to slaughter innocent men and boys because he was angry with Nabal was a sin. What's worse, he would be causing his men to sin as well.

We all have people who watch us. We need to be careful that our words and actions don't cause others to stumble. We need to keep a reign on our emotions.

"*Do all things without murmurings and disputings*." Philippians 2:14