

Weekly Word

April 21, 2008

By Mary Ruth Stone

Devotion

Wise Man, Wise Woman: Joab and the Woman of Beth Maachah

[Note: This month's devotions celebrate the wisdom of mature women and highlight men in scripture who were wise enough to accept it.]

God forgave David of his sin with Bathsheba. However, sin always has its consequences, and God reminded David of that truth: "Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife" [2 Samuel 12:10]. Sure enough, violence and heartbreak plagued David's household.

Perhaps the rebellion of his son Absalom was the most painful incident of all [2 Samuel 13-16]. His kingdom was embroiled in violence. Once Absalom was killed, David was deeply grieved. Others grasped for power. Who could be trusted? Among the rebels was Sheba the son of Bichri.

Joab, David's nephew and captain over the army of Israel, was in hot pursuit of Sheba. Sheba tried to escape by hiding in the town of Abel of Beth Maacha. Joab and his men surrounded the city and battered the walls. There is no indication that mercy toward innocent citizens was part of the plan.

Surprisingly, "... a wise woman cried out from the city," for Joab to listen. She said she was "among the peaceable and faithful in Israel." She inquired as to why he would want to kill innocent people in order to bring vengeance to one guilty traitor. In spite being in the heat of battle, Joab took her advice. He said if she would deliver Sheba, he would leave the rest of the city in peace. The head of Sheba was thrown over the wall as evidence that he had been killed. Joab returned to Jerusalem, and the wise woman and her city survived.

A man of war wisely paused to listen to a woman of peace. Because of that choice, many lives were saved while doing no harm to the mission of the army of Israel. Joab's warriors lived to fight another day. The innocent citizens of Abel of Beth Maachah lived in peace.

Scripture

"I am among the peaceable and faithful in Israel. You seek to destroy a city and a mother in Israel. Why would you swallow up the inheritance of the Lord?" (2 Samuel 20:19).

This 'n That

"The spiritual insight of women, that other faith perspective on the world, is missing, and we are all the poorer for it."

— Joan Chittester

Prayer

Lord,

Help us to lend an ear as You give a voice to the old and the wise both male and female. Amen.

Listening,
Mary Ruth