

THE WOMAN OF TEKOA... Israel's famous actress
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(2 SAMUEL 14:1-23)

"Now Joab the son of Zeruah perceived that the king's heart was toward Absalom," and the matter caused grave concern. Joab sighed as he remembered the tragic events of former years. Absalom's favourite sister had been seduced by her evil step-brother, and the proud prince had ruthlessly planned to exterminate Amnon. His schemes had succeeded, and fleeing before justice, Absalom had gone to a distant land. All these details were well known throughout the nation; but Joab, the most intimate of the king's friends, knew that David was grieving. "And Joab sent to Tekoah, and fetched thence a wise woman, and said unto her, I pray thee, feign thyself to be a mourner, and put on mourning apparel, and anoint not thyself with oil, but be as a woman that had a long time mourned for the dead. And come to the king and speak on this manner unto him. So Joab put the words in her mouth" (2 Sam. 14: 2, 3).

Her Great Sorrow

She was a great actress. Only those with similar gifts will understand how she succeeded in deceiving her royal master, for as king David listened to her pitiful cry, his heart melted. "What aileth thee?" he asked; and she replied, "I am indeed a widow woman, and mine husband is dead" (vv. 4, 5). Then she told the heart-rending account of her two boys fighting in the field, and how one had been slain. She described how the rest of her family now demanded the slayer's execution, and how she was in danger of losing her second boy. Her body shook with suppressed sobbing as she unfolded her sad story. When she lifted a tear-stained face to look at king David, he saw her anguish, and said, "Go to thine house, and I will give charge concerning thee" (v. 8). Still she continued until the king, irritated by her persistence, exclaimed, "As the Lord liveth, there shall not one hair of thy son fall to the earth" (v. 11). Then as he watched, a transformation took place before him, and he became speechless with wonder.

Her Great Sermon

Slowly she shook the dust from her dress; she threw back her cloak, and immediately David perceived a change in her demeanour. Her eyes filled with accusations as she said, "The king doth speak this thing as one that is faulty, in that the king doth not fetch home again his banished" (v. 13). King David, you swear that my boy shall be protected. Why, then, do you not protect your own son who occupies a similar position? "For we must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground neither doth God respect any person: yet doth he devise means that his banished be not expelled from him" (v. 14). King David, you believe in the law and the prophets; you regularly offer the sacrifices. Why is this so? Is it not because God has made provision whereby His sinful children may draw near to His footstool? Although through the folly of sin we may be banished from His presence, God's grace does not expel us for ever. We may bring our offerings and confess our sins, and at the altar of mercy receive pardon. If God can do such things, should you not follow His example?

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Her Great Success

Against the wiles of this talented actress, David had no defence. Ultimately he asked, "Is not the hand of Joab with thee in all this?" (v. 19). Then the king was told the complete story, and finally he sent for his trusted servant and said, "Behold now, I have done this thing: go therefore, bring the young man Absalom again (v. 21). The actress bowed in the dust, and her eyes were smiling. She had played to the smallest audience of her career, but this had been her greatest performance. In spite of the fact that her theological outlook was limited to a Tabernacle, the laws of Moses, and the daily offerings, she presented an outstanding case before the royal judge, and won the verdict. We can only imagine what she might have said had she been able to speak of the love of God in Christ; the reconciliation made through the cross, and the glorious Gospel of saving grace. In very deed and truth, "he doth devise means that his banished be not expelled from him." Dear lady, we salute you! What a pity you are unable to stand in our pulpits. Our churches would be packed to capacity if you were the preacher.

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