

When The Boss Is Wrong Wilson L.Thompson, Ph.D.

Employees/servants commonly have to cope with managers who goof ignorantly or perversely. When Ahab's soldiers came out of besieged Samaria, drunken King Benhadad foolishly commanded his troops, "Whether they be come out for peace, take them alive; or whether they be come out for war, take them alive. ... And the king of Israel went out ... and slew the Syrians with a great slaughter" (I Kings 20:18-21).

Similarly, *Nabal Herds, Inc.* came into dire peril when Nabal refused to pay for his security service, provided by the future King David's armed men. David angrily mobilized his men to annihilate the whole house of Nabal. One of Nabal's faithful servants warned Abigail, his wife, of their mortal danger. In panic, this young man added that Nabal "is such a son of Belial, that a man cannot speak to him" (I Samuel 25:17).

Abigail, like Rebekah earlier (Genesis 27:1-17), took effective action to avert disaster for her foolish husband and all of their servant-saints. Beautiful Abigail cooled David's anger with a hastily assembled peace-offering in tardy payment for his army's security service. Then, she successfully counseled him *not* to seek personal vengeance by shedding innocent blood. After Nabal suddenly died of a stroke, David summoned and married Abigail, who had given him such wise counsel (I Samuel 25:18-42).

The house of Syrian General Naaman was likewise blessed with good-hearted servants who appreciated their master's kindness. But, he had leprosy. Happily, a captive Israelite maid, free of bitterness even in captivity, attended Naaman's wife. Since she wished the best for Naaman, her master, she told her mistress, "Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy" (II Kings 5:2-3). Naaman heard of her words of hope for deliverance from his debilitating leprosy.

Soon the King of Syria dispatched Naaman to the King of Israel with presents of silver and gold and a letter: "I have therewith sent Naaman my servant to thee, that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy" (II Kings 5:6). When he read it, the King threw up his hands at this impossible demand. The Prophet Elisha sent a message to Israel's King to "Let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel" (II Kings 5:8). Accordingly, Naaman came to Elisha's house only to receive a curt command via messenger, "Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean" (II Kings 5:10).

Naaman was offended and complained, "Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the LORD his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. ... So he turned and went away in a rage" (I Kings 5:11-12). Yet, unlike Nabal, Naaman could be reasoned with when he cooled off. So, his servants said, "My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?" (II Kings 5:13). Then Naaman obeyed God's command, he was cleansed of leprosy and he became a believer in the Lord (II Kings 5:14-19).

The thousands of anonymous servant-saints under Jacob had no such remedy. Jacob's besetting sin, romantic obsession with Rachel and hatred of Leah (Genesis 29:31), portended civil war in Israel after his passing. Leah's sons, Simeon and Levi, opted for vigilante justice for their seduced sister Dinah. They led their proto tribal servants to massacre and loot the whole town of Shechem (Genesis 34:25-31). After Rachel's death, Reuben seduced Bilhah, Jacob's concubine (Genesis 35:22). Leah's sons envied Rachel's son, Joseph, whom Jacob made Master Shepherd, and heartlessly sold him into slavery (Genesis 37:1ff).

Jacob's observant servants could only work and pray that God would address Israel's otherwise intractable family problems among his middle-manager sons. They were forced to rely upon the Holy Spirit to make intercession for them "with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Romans 8:26). Yet, in God's providence, Joseph became ruler of all Egypt under Pharaoh. As high minister, incognito, he ordered Jacob to send Benjamin to Egypt where Joseph had been enslaved. Benjamin's arrival evidenced Jacob's repentance of his obsessive preference for Rachel's children. Joseph gave his brothers an opportunity to confess and repent of treason against him through his "Ye are spies" charade.

Thus, God used Joseph through famine to move Israel into Egypt to become a nation. As Joseph later declared, “But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good ... to save much people alive” (Genesis 50:20). Our Lord always provides a way of escape for His people even when tempted by an errant boss (I Corinthians 10:13)!