

**Ecclesiastes 10: 4; “Composure Allays Great Offense”, Message # 68 in the series – “Remember Your Creator”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on July 19<sup>th</sup>, 2020.**

It is interesting to note the different translations of this verse in the well accepted formal equivalency translations which I regularly use and consult. In the King James version it says, “If the spirit of the ruler rise up against thee, leave not thy place; for yielding pacifieth great offenses.” In the New King James the last phrase reads, “For conciliation pacifies great offenses.” The ESV says – “For calmness will lay great offenses to rest.” The American Standard Version of 1901 says – “Gentleness allayeth great offenses”. In the margin it says – “Calmness leaveth great sins undone.” And in the New American Standard Version it reads, “Because composure allays great offense.” It is obvious that you and I have something very important to learn from this verse.

The lessons that we need to learn, relate to our attitude and our actions in relation to those in political authority over us. 1<sup>st</sup> of all – It may be the case that something that you have said or done may have provoked a ruler so that his spirit rises against you; yet he may be conciliated. 2<sup>nd</sup> – It may be the case that something you have said or done has been foolish, or it may have been wise; nevertheless you should not abandon your position. And 3<sup>rd</sup> – It may be the case that if the ruler’s spirit does rise against you; still, your showing composure will allay great offenses. So let’s see if we can learn together and grow together in relation to this verse; to learn to be of a calm spirit in the presence of the greatest earthly authorities.

**1<sup>st</sup> – It may be the case that something that you say or do may provoke a ruler so that his spirit rises against you; yet he may be conciliated.**

“If the spirit of the ruler rises against you”, “If the ruler’s temper rises against you,” do not leave your post; do not abandon your position.” Solomon is speaking of very practical matters of how to be wise in this chapter. Wisdom is the right application of knowledge. For the Christian it is the right application of the Scriptures. This verse directs you in what you should do if a person in ruling authority over you is not pleased with you; indeed they may be angry with you. It may be the case that you have brought this on yourself. You may have said something or done something that may have provoked this person in authority so that their attitude changes toward you, and their spirit rises against you. Perhaps what you have said or done was sinful; perhaps it was righteous. Perhaps your words were unwise or unguarded. We are not told in the text what it is that we might have done. But the response of the ruler was that his spirit rose against us. We need to understand that the problem may be with the ruler or it may be with us. We need to try to figure out whose problem it is, so that we ourselves can know what our responsibilities are before God, first of all.

It is the responsibility of the governed to righteously submit to the governor or king, or the person in authority over us. It is the responsibility of the governor to rule in the fear of the Lord and to be just in his dealings with the people over whom he rules. Turn with me to 1 Peter 2: 11. “Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.” “Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evil doers and for the praise of those who do good.” “For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men—as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God.”

We see here that the Christian is to abstain from fleshly lusts which will wage war against his own soul. This is termed “having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles”. The best strategy of how to live your Christian life is to pursue righteousness, holiness, and truth as the Bible commands. Fleshly lusts will lead you, and other people, to only consider your own personal liberties to sin, and to somehow to be independent of God. They will lead you to only pursue your own personal selfish interests, and to flaunt and oppose legitimate political authority over you. Unbelieving people and other Christian people will watch to see how you live your Christian life and how you react to various situations which involve your submission to authority. If you are intent upon doing God’s will as it is revealed in the Scriptures you may be spoken against as an evildoer. But nevertheless, they will see your good works and later on, in the time of God’s visitation, in the time of temporal judgments which God or rulers bring; or at the Last Judgment when Christ returns, they will glorify God.

This is what the true Christian is called to. We are called to submit to the reasonable and righteous use of political authority over us. We are to submit ourselves first of all to God in what God has commanded in the Scriptures concerning political government. And then we are not to let our fleshly lusts get the better of us so that we will dishonor God in what we says or do. All Christians should know that they are free; free from the condemnation of God in respect to their sins. But we should not use our freedom and liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bond-servants of God as the Apostle Peter says. So, if the spirit of the ruler rises against you because you have said something amiss, or done something wrong, then you should be willing to repent of it, even publicly before him, if necessary. This leads us on to our next point, which is –

**2<sup>nd</sup> – It may be the case that something you have said or done has been foolish, or it may have been wise; nevertheless you should not abandon your position.**

“If the spirit of the ruler rises against you, do not leave your post; for conciliation pacifies great offenses. Turn with me over to 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel Chapter 25. We have here a good example of what we are talking about, in relation to our text. “Then Samuel died; and the Israelites gathered together and lamented for him, and buried him at his home in Ramah.” “And David arose and went down to the wilderness of Paran.” “Now there was a man in Maon whose business was in Carmel, and the man was very rich.” “He had three thousand sheep and a thousand goats.” “And he was shearing his sheep in Carmel. The name of the man was Nabal, and the name of his wife Abigail.” “And she was a woman of good understanding and beautiful appearance; but the man was harsh and evil in his doings.” “He was of the house of Caleb.”

“When David heard in the wilderness that Nabal was shearing his sheep, David sent ten young men, and David said to the young men, “Go up to Carmel, go to Nabal, and greet him in my name.” “And thus you shall say to him who lives in prosperity: ‘Peace be to you, peace to your house, and peace to all that you have!’ “Now I have heard that you have shearers.” “Your shepherds were with us, and we did not hurt them, nor was there anything missing from them all the while they were in Carmel.” “Ask your young men, and they will tell you.” “Therefore let my young men find favor in your eyes, for we come on a feast day.” “Please give whatever comes to your hand to your servants and to your son David.” “So when David’s young men came, they spoke to Nabal according to all these words in the name of David, and waited.” “Then Nabal answered David’s servants, and said, ‘Who is David, and who is the son of Jesse?’ “There are many servants nowadays who break away each one from his master.” “Shall I then take my bread and my water and my meat that I have killed for my shearers, and give it to men when I do not know where they are from?”

“So David’s young men turned on their heels and went back ; and they came and told him all these words.” “Then David said to his men, ‘Every man gird on his sword.’ “So every man girded on his sword, and David also girded on his sword.” “And about four hundred men went with David and two hundred stayed with the supplies.” “Now one of the young men told Abigail,

Nabal's wife, saying, 'Look, David sent messengers from the wilderness of greet our master and he reviled them.' "But the men were very good to us, and we were not hurt, nor did we miss anything as long as we accompanied them, when we were in the fields." "They were a wall to us both by night and day, all the time we were with them keeping the sheep." "Now therefore know and consider what you will do, for harm is determined against our master and against all his household." "For he is such a scoundrel that one cannot speak to him."

Now you can see here that the spirit of the ruler had risen against Nabal. I know that David was not yet the king, but he had been anointed king by Samuel and no doubt Nabal knew of this, because of what Abigail says in her speech to David, later in verse 30. "And it shall come to pass, when the Lord has done for my lord according to all the good that He has spoken concerning you, and appointed you ruler over Israel....and etc." She and Nabal both understood that the Samuel had anointed David to be king over Israel even though he was not yet established in his kingdom. David had acted the part of a good ruler toward Nabal, and yet Nabal had treated David's servants with disdain. Therefore the spirit of the ruler, David, was righteously raised against him.

But look now, at how godly Abigail behaves when she hears the news of what her husband had done to cause this to come about. Does she flee her post as Nabal's wife? Does she sit, and do nothing, to conciliate this matter? No, it says in verse 18 – "Then Abigail made haste and took two hundred loaves of bread, two skins of wine, five sheep already dressed, five seahs of roasted grain, one hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs, and loaded them on donkeys." "And she said to her servants, 'Go on before me; see, I am coming after you.'" Her husband was showing everyone that he was a fool. His heart was at his left hand. Does Abigail go to berate her husband? No, she takes action on his behalf so that his life and his household would be saved from being killed. She would attempt to appease the wrath of the ruler. This is what every godly person should do when the ruler is acting righteously.

**3<sup>rd</sup> – It may be the case that if the ruler's spirit does rise against you; still, your showing composure will allay great offenses.**

Verse 20 – "So it was, as she rode on the donkey, that she went down under cover of the hill; and there were David and his men, coming down toward her, and she met them." "Now David had said, 'Surely in vain I have protected all that this fellow has in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that belongs to him.'" (In other words – David had been a good governor in relation to this man; he watched over his property for his good, he says.) "And he has repaid me evil for good." "May God do so, and more also, to the enemies of David, if I leave one male of all who belong to him by morning light."

Let's see now what Abigail does and says. "Now when Abigail saw David, she dismounted quickly from the donkey, fell on her face before David, and bowed down to the ground." "So she fell at his feet and said: 'On me, my lord, on me let this iniquity be!'" "And please let your maidservant speak in your ears, and hear the words of your maidservant." "Please, let not my lord regard this scoundrel Nabal." "For as his name is, so is he: Nabal is his name and folly is with him!" "But I, your maidservant, did not see the young men of my lord whom you sent." "Now therefore, my lord, as the Lord lives and as your soul lives, since the Lord has held you back from coming to bloodshed and from avenging yourself with your own hand, now then, let your enemies and those who seek harm for my lord be as Nabal." "And now this present which your maidservant has brought to my lord, let it be given to the young men who follow my lord."

"Please forgive the trespass of your maidservant." "For the Lord will certainly make for my lord an enduring house, because my lord fights the battles of the Lord, and evil is not found in you throughout your days." "Yet a man has risen to pursue you and seek your life, but the life of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of the living with the Lord your God; and the lives of your enemies He shall sling out, as from the pocket of a sling." "And it shall come to pass, when the

Lord has done for my lord according to all that He has spoken concerning you, and has appointed you ruler over Israel, that this will be no grief to you, nor offense of heart to my lord, either that you have shed blood without cause, or that my lord has avenged himself.” “But when the Lord has dealt well with my lord, then remember your maidservant.”

Now I would say that this was a very conciliatory speech that Abigail gave to David. It was the best speech that could have been given. I am sure that you are convinced as well, that it was her composure, her completely understanding of what she should say to David and how she should show him respect, which allayed the offense. It turned away and offset David’s wrath. She yielded to David and by her words of truth, and her attitude of contrition for the offenses which had been committed by her husband Nabal. She pacified David’s anger. Now look at how David responds.

Verse 32 – “Then David said to Abigail: ‘Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me!’ “And blessed is your advice and blessed are you, because you have kept me this day from coming to bloodshed and from avenging myself with my own hand.” “For indeed, as the Lord God of Israel lives, who has kept me back from hurting you, unless you had hurried and come to meet me, surely by morning light no males would have been left to Nabal!” “So David received from her hand what she had brought him, and said to her, “Go up in peace to your house.” “See, I have heeded your voice and respected your person.”

We haven’t time to go into the sequel to this amazing story. But suffice it to say that God rendered judgment Himself upon Nabal the fool, ten days latter, by striking him so that he died. And afterwards David actually sent and asked Abigail if she would become his wife. You and I should learn to quickly come to terms with the offenses that we give to a righteous ruler. If we or those closest to us have given offense, we should be quick to conciliate on our behalf or theirs. We should not leave our post. Our post, as a Christian, is to be faithful to God and to His truth. Our post is show composure when speaking with offended rulers, so that God might act, so that He might move in their heart in order that their anger might be allayed, and the offense forgiven, and good relations be restored. This principle of wisdom will glorify God and it will do us in good stead whether it is put into practice with kings, or with anyone else in authority over us, for that matter.