

David's Dealings with Nabal and Abigail

1 Samuel 25

1 Samuel 25 - "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. ² 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. ³ 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. ⁴ When David heard in the wilderness that Nabal was shearing his sheep, ⁵ 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. ⁶ 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! ⁷ 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. ⁸ 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.'"

⁹ So when David's young men came, they spoke to Nabal according to all these words in the name of David, and waited.

¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ 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?" ¹² So David's young men turned on their heels and went back; and they came and told him all these words. ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ Now one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, saying, "Look, David sent messengers from the wilderness to greet our master; and he reviled them. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ They were a wall to us both by night and day, all the time we were with them keeping the sheep. ¹⁷ 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."

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. ¹⁹ And she said to her servants, "Go on before me; see, I am coming after you." But she did not tell her husband Nabal. 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. ²¹ 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. And he has repaid me evil for good. ²² 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." ²³ Now when Abigail saw David, she dismounted quickly from the donkey, fell on her face before David, and bowed down to the ground. ²⁴ 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. ²⁵ Please, let not my lord regard this scoundrel Nabal. For as his name is, so is he: Nabal^[c] is his name, and folly is with him! But I, your maidservant, did not see the young men of my lord whom you sent. ²⁶ 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. ²⁷ And now this present which your maidservant has brought to my lord, let it be given to the young men who follow my lord. ²⁸ 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. ²⁹ 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. 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 has appointed you ruler over Israel, ³¹ 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.”

³² Then David said to Abigail: “Blessed is the LORD God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me! ³³ 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. ³⁴ 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!” ³⁵ 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.” ³⁶ Now Abigail went to Nabal, and there he was, holding a feast in his house, like the feast of a king. And Nabal’s heart was merry within him, for he was very drunk; therefore she told him nothing, little or much, until morning light. ³⁷ So it was, in the morning, when the wine had gone from Nabal, and his wife had told him these things, that his heart died within him, and he became like a stone.

³⁸ Then it happened, after about ten days, that the LORD struck Nabal, and he died. ³⁹ So when David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, “Blessed be the LORD, who has pleaded the cause of my reproach from the hand of Nabal, and has kept His servant from evil! For the LORD has returned the wickedness of Nabal on his own head.” And David sent and proposed to Abigail, to take her as his wife. ⁴⁰ When the servants of David had come to Abigail at Carmel, they spoke to her saying, “David sent us to you, to ask you to become his wife.” ⁴¹ Then she arose, bowed her face to the earth, and said, “Here is your maidservant, a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord.” ⁴² So Abigail rose in haste and rode on a donkey, attended by five of her maidens; and she followed the messengers of David, and became his wife. ⁴³ David also took Ahinoam of Jezreel, and so both of them were his wives. ⁴⁴ But Saul had given Michal his daughter, David’s wife, to Palti^[d] the son of Laish, who was from Gallim.”

Background Notes

The Wilderness of Paran was south of Hebron, and here a rich rancher named Nabal lived with his beautiful and wise wife, Abigail. It must have been an arranged marriage because it doesn’t seem logical that such a beautiful and intelligent woman would have selected such a harsh and evil man as a husband. Beauty and the Beast (that is, Abigail and Nabal) lived in a rich area of Maon, where David had spent some time before (1 Samuel 23).

Nabal's ranch was in nearby Carmel, and there he owned three thousand sheep and one thousand goats. These were large flocks, and a measure of Nabal's wealth. Because David and his men were camped in the same area, they naturally formed a protective barrier against any sheep stealing or robbery of Nabal. So on a festive day, when Nabal was shearing his sheep, David decided to ask Nabal for a little provision for his men in return for his protection of Nabal's livestock and Nabal's men. But Nabal didn't respond in kindness. In fact, he not only set David's men away empty handed, but he denounced David's character as well. When David heard Nabal's response, he was enraged and told four hundred of his men to gird on their swords and follow him. David was about to take his own revenge.

Doctrinal Points

1. God allows "Nabals" to test our faith and patience.

Earlier in his life David passed a great test of faith and patience (1 Samuel 24). In 1 Samuel 25, David was again tested and he failed – almost with disastrous results. To be sure, Nabal was not a nice guy and was unfair and unjust in his dealings with David, but such behavior didn't require capital punishment! We can understand why David was enraged, but David lost control of himself when he told his men to put on their swords and follow him, with the intent of wiping out Nabal and his men. David should have waited on the Lord as he did in 1 Samuel 24, but David failed the test of patience here. Even though David was prevented from carrying out his wrong intentions by Abigail's intervention, David still failed the test of faith and patience.

What about us? God allows us to be tested in the areas of our faith and our patience, and often he uses Nabal-like people and situations to do so. Do we pass the test - or do we become enraged and "gird on our swords" to take revenge? Are we able to bite our tongues and control our anger and wait on God? James 1:3-4 says, "... *the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.*"

How are we doing? Do you know any "Nabals"? God allows "Nabals" to test our faith and patience.

2. God provides "Abigails" to save the day.

Abigail intervened as a peacemaker and saved the day for David. Notice how Abigail approached David, and learn the lessons for being a peacemaker today.

1. Abigail brought a gift of food to meet the needs of David and his men. Meeting felt needs goes a long way in peacemaking.
2. Abigail showed humility and spoke softly. Proverbs 15:1 says, "A soft answer turns away wrath."
3. Abigail acknowledged the truth that David was in the right and Nabal was in the wrong, but that still didn't justify David shedding blood. David could not get around the logic of her argument.

4. Abigail reminded David that as king he would not want a bloodbath on his record, and he agreed.

David's listened to reason. His emotional outburst of wrath subsided, and he called off the attack. Abigail saved the day.

Are we peacemakers like Abigail? The Lord Jesus said in His Sermon on the Mount, "*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.*" Let's follow Abigail's steps for making peace, and let's thank the Lord for the Abigails He provides when we are confronted by a trying situation! God provides "Abigails" to save the day.

Practical Application

Let God handle the "Nabals."

Abigail's marriage with David, the rightful king, may be a spiritual picture of our union with Christ, the True King. However, the practical application here is "Let God handle the 'Nabals.'" There will always be a few "Nabals" around, and God may use them to test our patience. It may be a neighbor. It may be a person that you work with, or work for. It may be someone at church. We should be careful not to retaliate in anger or look for ways to take revenge when confronted by a difficult person. We need to be patient, and trust God to deal with the "Nabal."

Allow God to handle the "Nabals." God has ways of dealing them! His method may not always be as dramatic as the way He took care of Nabal in 1 Samuel 25, but God has His ways. So, let God handle the "Nabals"!