

## **A Fool with Too Much Money Made to Look Better by a Smart Wife**

**1 Samuel 25**

**By [Dr. Derek W. H. Thomas](#)**

Turn with me if you would to 1 Samuel chapter 25, 1 Samuel chapter 25. We've just looked last week at the sparing of Saul's life in the cave at Engedi and now in the first verse of chapter 25 we read that Samuel is dead. Samuel died and all Israel assembled and mourned for him and they buried him in his house at Ramah. This is a turning point in the history of Israel. Samuel had been the voice of God. He had been the mouthpiece through whom the word of the Lord had come to Israel and now he is dead.

Now, let me just explain something before I read the first few verses of chapter 25. We read that David goes to the wilderness of Paran, and Paran is way down in the northeast section of the Sinai Peninsula. If the stronghold at the end of verse 22. David was wise enough not to go back with Saul but to go with his men to the stronghold, and some commentators believe that that may well have been Masada. Some of you have been to Masada, way down on the west side of the Dead Sea and it certainly would be a stronghold if that was Masada. Paran down on the Sinai Peninsula would not have been that far of a journey, but the journey from Paran, verse 2, to Maon, and you'll see further in verse 2 a reference to Carmel in the valley of Megiddo — that's a long journey from the Sinai Peninsula almost all the way up to the Sea of Galilee. So you understand that there's probably weeks and perhaps months that just don't get referenced here.

Now before we read the passage together let's look to God in prayer.

*Father, we thank You again for the Scriptures and pray now for Your blessings. Holy Spirit come and grant us illumination as we read this narrative of 1 Samuel together. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Now Samuel died and all Israel assembled and mourned for him, and they buried him in his house at Ramah.

Then David rose and went down to the wilderness of Paran. And there was a man in Maon whose business was in Carmel. The man was very rich; he had three thousand sheep and a thousand goats. He was shearing his sheep in Carmel. Now the name of the man was Nabal, and the name of his wife was Abigail. The woman was discerning and

beautiful, but the man was harsh and badly behaved; he was a Calebite. David heard in the wilderness that Nabal was shearing his sheep. So David sent ten young men. And David said to the young men, "Go up to Carmel, and go to Nabal and greet him in my name. And thus you shall greet him: 'Peace be to you, and peace be to your house, and peace be to all that you have. I hear that you have shearers. Now your shepherds have been with us, and we did them no harm, and they missed nothing all the time 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 you have at hand to your servants and to your son David.'"

When David's young men came, they said all this to Nabal in the name of David, and then they waited. And Nabal answered David's servants, "Who is David? Who is the son of Jesse? There are many servants these days who are breaking away from their masters. Shall I take my bread and my water and my meat that I have killed for my shearers and give it to men who come from I do not know where?" So David's young men turned away and came back and told him all this. And David said to his men, "Every man strap on his sword!" And every man of them strapped on his sword. David also strapped on his sword. And about four hundred men went up after David, while two hundred remained with the baggage.

But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, "Behold, David sent messengers out of the wilderness to greet our master, and he railed at them. Yet the men were very good to us, and we suffered no harm, and we did not miss anything when we were in the fields, as long as we went with them. They were a wall to us both by night and by day, all the while we were with them keeping the sheep. Now therefore know this and consider what you should do, for harm is determined against our master and against all his house, and he is such a worthless man that one cannot speak to him."

Then Abigail made haste and took two hundred loaves and two skins of wine and five sheep already prepared and five seahs of parched grain and a hundred clusters of raisins and two hundred cakes of figs, and laid them on donkeys. And she said to her young men, "Go on before me; behold, I come after you." But she did not tell her husband Nabal. And as she rode on the donkey and came down under cover of the mountain, behold, David and his men came down toward her, and she met them. Now David had said, "Surely in vain have I guarded all that this fellow has in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that belonged to him, and he has returned me evil for good. God do so to the enemies of David and more also, if by morning I leave so much as one male of all who belong to him."

When Abigail saw David, she hurried and got down from the donkey and fell before David on her face and bowed to the ground. She fell at his feet and said, "On me alone, my lord, be the guilt. Please let your servant speak in your ears, and hear the words of your servant. Let not my lord regard this worthless fellow, Nabal, for as his name is, so is he. Nabal is his name, and folly is with him. But I your servant did not see the young men of my lord, whom you sent. Now then, my lord, as the Lord lives, and as your soul lives, because the Lord has restrained you from bloodguilt and from saving with your own hand, now then let your enemies and those who seek to do evil to the lord be as Nabal. And now let this present that your servant has brought to my lord be given to the young men who follow my lord. Please forgive the trespass of your servant. For the Lord will certainly make my lord a sure house, because my lord is fighting the battles of the Lord, and evil shall not be found in you as long as you live. If men rise up to pursue you and to seek your life, the life of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of the living in the care of the Lord your God. And the lives of your enemies He shall sling out as from the follow of a sling. And when the Lord has done to my lord according to all the good that He has spoken concerning you and has appointed you prince over Israel, my lord shall have no cause of grief or pangs of conscience for having shed blood without cause or for my lord taking vengeance himself. And when the Lord has dealt well with my lord, then remember your servant."

And David said to Abigail, "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me! Blessed be your discretion, and blessed be you, who have kept me this day from bloodguilt and from avenging myself with my own hand! For as surely as the Lord the God of Israel lives, who has restrained me from hurting you, unless you had hurried and come to meet me, truly by morning there had not been left to Nabal so much as one male." Then David received from her hand what she had brought him. And he said to her, "Go up in peace to your house. See, I have obeyed your voice, and I have granted your petition."

And Abigail came to Nabal, and behold, 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. So she told him nothing at all until the morning light. In the morning, when the wine had gone out of Nabal, his wife told him these things, and his heart died within him, and he became as a stone. And about ten days later the Lord struck Nabal, and he died.

When David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, "Blessed be the Lord who has avenged the insult I received at the hand of Nabal, and has kept back His servant from wrongdoing. The Lord has returned the evil of Nabal on his own head." Then David sent and spoke to Abigail, to take her as his wife. When the servants of David came to Abigail at Carmel, they said to her, "David has sent us to you to take you to him as his wife." And

she rose and bowed with her face to the ground and said, "Behold, your handmaid is a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord." And Abigail hurried and rose and mounted a donkey, and her five young women attended her. She followed the messengers of David and became his wife.

David also took Ahinoam of Jezreel, and both of them became his wives. Saul had given Michal his daughter, David's wife, to Palti the son of Laish, who was of Gallim.

Well thus far God's holy, inerrant Word.

Now three things I want us to see in this passage — Nabal, Abigail, and David. Nabal first of all.

## **I. Nabal**

We're told in verse 2 that he was very rich. His name, and we're told this by the narrator in verse 3, and we are told by the servant in verse 17, and we're told it again by Abigail in verse 25, that Nabal in Hebrew means *a fool*. Now, I don't know how this works. Mom and dad are holding the little baby and they say, "Now what are we going to call him? Let's call him 'fool.'" I don't think so. In all likelihood this was a name given to him perhaps after the event as the story is now told many decades later. You know, he was "so-and-so the fool" and he becomes known as Nabal. He is harsh and badly behaved. He's a brute of a man and Nabal takes advantage of David. Nabal has all these sheep, he has young men who are shepherds to take these sheep to find grass and food and they wander about hither and yon and at least for some period of time they were under David's protection. David and his men protected Nabal's sheep, his flocks, and the shepherds. They didn't pilfer any of the sheep. They didn't kill any of the six hundred men and perhaps other servants and perhaps family members too. That's a lot of mouths to feed and David sees an opportunity for a return of a favor. This man is wealthy. David has protected them from harm. Pilfering sheep was a daily occurrence in ancient Middle East and it's now time for Nabal to provide David and his men with some food. "Give us this day our daily bread." And David, that David has just told us that God provides our daily bread but Nabal is not going to provide David with so much as a loaf of bread.

The response of Nabal to the young men that David sends to him is curt. "Who is David? Who is this son of Jesse? You know these are bad times. People are always running away from their masters." Of course he knew who David was. David's a no-good runaway servant, indicative of the youth of today. William Taylor, who was at Broadway Tabernacle in New York at the end of the nineteenth century, wrote many fine books, particularly biographical sketches of the Old Testament. He says about Nabal,

“Do not think that this race is extinct, not at all. You are very likely to meet him. You may have met him yesterday. You may meet him perhaps tomorrow, the man with heavy purse and light head, with full pockets and empty cranium, is everywhere a Nabal. And if happily he combines with these the first of a drunkard, he will only make the identity more complete.”

He's a fool. David is the future king, so even on those grounds alone he's a fool, but he has shown no hospitality. He has shown no generosity. He hasn't seen that all that he has is a gift of God and to be shared with those who are genuinely in need. This is Nabal, the fool.

## **II. Abigail**

Let's talk about Abigail. Several women this morning pulled me aside and said how much they liked the title of this sermon. I won't tell you who they were, but many a marriage has been saved by a good wife. They invariably make us look better than we are. Look at David's response in verse 13. He says to his men, “Every man strap on his sword.” It's instant. David is offended. David is hot and angry. David wants revenge. Who does this Nabal think that he is? And four hundred of his six hundred men, four hundred, strap on their swords led by David and it's going to be a bloodbath. David says so. If Abigail had not intervened all the men in Nabal's household would be dead by morning. He would have committed a greater atrocity than the one that Saul had done with the high priest and the eighty-five priests and their families at Nob. David was capable of doing worse things than Saul.

And Abigail sees it and instantly this wise, savvy, courageous woman, she has to act immediately. Food — loaves of bread and raisins and fig cakes and sheep already prepared, laden on these donkeys, she sends the young men ahead just in case she doesn't get there in time. And when she comes to David she shows — well look at verse 23 — she shows first of all great respect. She bows to him. She, in verse 23, “begs” that she be heard. In verse 25 she says to David that “Nabal deserves all the attention of a fool — that is, none.” And she utters this prayer that David be kept from bloodguilt. Her concern at this point is for her husband and the men and she asks forgiveness on behalf of her rotten husband. She pleads with David for forgiveness. She affirms David's status as a king. She's wise, she's resourceful, she's courageous, and she believes God's Word.

Now four times, and this is the heart of this passage, four times in verse 26, in verse 33, in verse 34, and again in verse 39, we read that Abigail is God's instrument, she is God's instrument in preventing David from doing what his heart had inclined to do. Let's pick up one of them in verse 33 — “Blessed be your discretion, and blessed be you, who have kept me this day from bloodguilt...for as surely as the Lord the God of Israel lives, who has retrained me from hurting

you.” God has stepped in. This is the providence of God.

My friends, how many times have we been bent on doing evil, on saying something or doing something and the only thing that prevented us from doing it was providence, because the heart was already inclined, the will was already resolved; we just didn't have the opportunity? How many times have you thought to yourself, “When I see this person I'm going to say this and this and this”? And then the person doesn't turn up. She's gone shopping and by the time she comes home it's all evaporated. That's providence. That's the intervention of God.

Now this is on a much larger scale to be sure, but four times in this text it's underlined — God has intervened, preventing David from doing what his heart had already determined to do. Now, as my dear friend Ralph Davis says in his commentary on this passage which was enormously funny, he says, “It helped a lot that the Savior of David in this instant had a skirt.” It was a woman, and not just a woman but a pretty woman, a beautiful woman, no doubt deflecting David's attention from the task that he had determined to do. Ah, the strange providence of God. What a strange providence of God that is.

### **III. David**

David, David you see — and let's talk about David for a minute. Here's the question I want to ask tonight. We haven't asked this question in a while as we've been studying 1 Samuel. I want to ask a very simple question. Let's pull away from the text, this extraordinary story, let's pull away from it for a second. Let's hover thirty-five thousand feet above this text and let's ask ourselves this question — Is David the savior of Israel?

Is David the savior of Israel?

That's a fair enough question because the history of redemption has been pointing in the direction of a savior. Is David the prophet that Moses spoke about in Deuteronomy 18, the prophet like him that God would raise up to be the mouthpiece of God on behalf of Israel? Is David that man? Is David the fulfillment of all of the Levitical sacrifices, the slaying of bulls and goats and heifers and turtledoves in the temple that would be built and by David himself but at this point in the tabernacle? All those Levitical sacrifices offered on behalf of sin that pointed to forgiveness — can we say God made David to be sin for us that knew no sin that we might be reckoned the righteousness of God in David? Can we say that? Can we say, behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world? David is a lamb of God. David is one of God's sheep.

But can we look at David and say as John the Baptist said to another, “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”? Is David the fulfillment of the promise in Genesis 3:15 that the seed of the woman would bruise the head of

Satan? Is that David?

No. No, because great and extraordinary and powerful as David was now becoming he was a sinner capable of vengeance, capable of slaughtering hundreds of men just because his pride had been beat.

Oh, at the end of this chapter when Abigail goes home Nabal, as usual, was drunk and she waits until morning and then the cardiologists among us can tell us what this is - his heart became a stone. He had some sort of cardiac episode and ten days later he's dead. God struck him dead. And as my mother would say, "with unseemly haste" she becomes David's wife. Now David already has a wife, but the narrator tells you that Saul had given his daughter Michal, who was married to David, to another man. Now, while you're working out the church discipline of that particular scenario, the writer slips in right at the end, "David also took Ahinoam" and there's polygamy just like that. He's a man of his time. He is adopting the cultural relativity that is all too common among Christians of the twenty-first century because all he's saying is, "Well if it's good enough for them it's good enough for me."

Can David be my Savior?

Can David be the savior of Israel? And the answer my friends is an overwhelming no, he cannot, because my Savior has to be without sin if he is to represent God to me and represent me to God, he must be without sin, without blemish, without defect. He must be perfect and there's only one. There is only one who meets that and it is Jesus. Jesus is the only one we have. He's our only hope. He is our only hope and He is all we need.

On Christ, not on David, on Christ — David prefigured many things about the Savior to be sure, not least his office as a king, not least the fact that he was a shepherd and Jesus is the great Shepherd of the sheep, but David could never ever be my Savior.

Only Jesus can be my Savior because He is perfect. He is without spot or blemish or wrinkle or any such thing. He's the only one we have who can save us.

And my friends, He's there for you, whoever you may be and whatever sin you have committed. Whatever blemish mars your character and brings your life tonight into a heap of trouble and mess, Jesus can save you and wipe all that sin away. But though our sins be red like crimson, in Christ they can be as white as snow.

Let's pray.

*Father we thank You for these extraordinary stories of the Old Testament,*

*glimpsing and foreshadowing the need for a Savior and a Deliverer. And tonight again we see that no earthly man or woman could ever be that Savior that we need. We thank You for the Lord Jesus. Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world and whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life. That's Your word to us and we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Please stand. Receive the Lord's benediction. Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

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