

A Message from 1 Samuel 25

Nabal, Abigail, and David

We will follow up on yesterday's open meeting in connection with Timothy. Please turn with me to 1 Samuel 25, beginning at verse two.

"There was a man in Maon whose possessions were in Carmel, and the man was very great. He had three thousand sheep and a thousand goats, and he was shearing his sheep in Carmel. Now the name of the man was Nabal, and the name of his wife was Abigail. She was a woman of good understanding and of a beautiful countenance, but the man was churlish and evil in his doings, and he was of the house of Caleb."

"And David heard in the wilderness that Nabal was shearing his sheep. And David sent out ten young men, and David said unto the young men, Get ye up to Carmel and go to Nabal and greet him in my name. And thus shall ye say to him that liveth in prosperity: Peace be both to thee and peace be to thy house and peace be unto all that thou hast."

"Now I have heard that thou hast shearers. Now thy shepherds which were with us — we hurt them not, neither was there anything missing unto them, all the while that they were in Carmel. Ask the young men and they will show thee. Therefore, let the young men find favor in thine eyes, for we come on a good day. Give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to thine hand, unto thy servants, and to thy son David."

"And when David's young men came, they spoke to Nabal according to all those words in the name of David, and ceased. And Nabal answered David's servants and said, Who is David? And who is the son of Jesse? There be many servants nowadays that break away every man from his master. Shall I then take my bread and my water and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers and give it unto men whom I know not whence they be?"

"So David's young men turned their way and went back and came and told David all those things. And David said unto his men, Gird every man his sword. And David also girded on his sword, and there went up after David about four hundred men, and two hundred abode by the stuff."

"But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, saying, Behold, David sent messengers out of the wilderness to salute our master, and he railed on them. But the men were very good unto us, and we were not hurt, neither missed we anything, as long

as we were conversant with them when we were in the fields. They were a wall unto us, both by night and day, all the while we were with them keeping the sheep. Now therefore, know and consider what thou wilt do, for evil is determined against our master and against all his household, for he is such a son of Belial that a man cannot speak to him."

"Then Abigail made haste and took two hundred loaves and two bottles of wine and five sheep ready dressed and five measures of parched corn and a hundred clusters of raisins and two hundred cakes of figs, and laid them on donkeys. And she said unto her servants, Go on before me; behold, I come after you. But she told not her husband."

"And it was so as she rode on her donkey that she came down by the covert of the hill, and behold, David and his men came down against her, and she met them. Now David had said, Surely in vain have I kept all that this fellow hath in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that pertained unto him, and he hath repaid me evil for good. So and more also do God unto the enemies of David if I leave of all that pertain to him by the morning light any that pisseth against the wall."

"And when Abigail saw David, she hasted and lighted off her donkey and fell before David on her face and bowed herself to the ground and fell at his feet and said, Upon me, my lord, upon me let this iniquity be, and let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak in thine audience and hear the words of thine handmaid. Let not my lord, I pray thee, regard this man of Belial, even Nabal, for as his name is, so is he. Nabal is his name and folly is with him. But I thine handmaid saw not the young men of my lord whom thou didst send."

"Now therefore, my lord, as Jehovah liveth and as thy soul liveth, seeing Jehovah hath withholden thee from coming to shed blood and from avenging thyself with thine own hand, now let thine enemies and they that seek evil to my lord be as Nabal. And now this blessing which thine handmaid hath brought unto my lord, let it even be given unto the young men that follow my lord."

"I pray thee, forgive the trespass of thine handmaid. For the Lord will certainly make my lord a sure house because my lord fighteth the battles of the Lord, and evil hath not been found in thee all thy days. Yet a man is risen to pursue thee and to seek thy soul, but the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with Jehovah thy God, and the souls of thine enemies them shall he sling out as out of the middle of a sling."

"And it shall come to pass, when the Lord shall have done to my lord according to all the good that he hath spoken concerning thee, and shall have appointed thee ruler over Israel, that this shall be no grief unto thee, neither that thou hast shed blood causeless,

or that my lord hath avenged himself. But when Jehovah shall have dealt well with my lord, then remember thine handmaid."

We will stop there for the time.

Nabal: Possessions Without Gratitude

We notice in verse two not the character of Nabal but his possessions. He was very rich — very great — with three thousand sheep and a thousand goats being sheared in Carmel. And we want to note that this man was of the house of Caleb, as stated in verse three.

Now we must connect another scripture here, because it is important. Turn over to Deuteronomy 26.

What did Nabal not do — though he was of the household of Caleb? The opening verses of Deuteronomy 26 tell us:

"And it shall be, when thou art come in unto the land which Jehovah thy God giveth thee for an inheritance and dost possess it and dwell therein, that thou shalt take of the first of all the fruit of the earth, which thou shalt bring of thy land that Jehovah thy God giveth thee, and thou shalt put it in a basket, and shalt go unto the place which the Lord thy God shall choose to place his name there. And thou shalt go unto the priest that shall be in those days and say unto him, I profess this day unto the Lord thy God that I am come unto the country which Jehovah sware unto our fathers for to give us. And the priest shall take the basket out of thine hand and set it down before the altar of Jehovah thy God."

Notice the connection: here is a descendant of Caleb, richly blessed according to what we read in 1 Samuel. And according to Deuteronomy, the reason for that blessing was to return to Jehovah what He had given them.

I think of that for the young ones here. We are descendants of godly parents whom God has blessed. As Paul says, bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. May our hearts be touched so that we too will bring unto the Lord, in due season, an offering of the bounty He has given us.

I am thinking of spiritual blessing primarily. For Israel, it was material because their inheritance of the land was earthly. But it speaks also of our inheritance, which is a heavenly one. We are called upon to reap the harvest, and then to do what? Verse two says, take of the first of all the fruit of the earth and put it in a basket. Turn over for a moment to Proverbs, chapter three, verse nine:

"Honor Jehovah with thy substance and with the first fruits of all thine increase, so shall thy barns be filled with plenty and thine presses shall burst out with new wine."

Who is He talking to? "My son." The Lord wants first of all, as Proverbs says, My son, give me thine heart. That is number one. Give Me your heart. Because He knows that if He has our hearts, He has everything. And we are called upon to keep our heart with all diligence, because out of it are the issues of life. Our heart goes after an object — and if it is Christ, it will always go toward Him; if it is self, it turns inward.

That is exactly where Nabal made his mistake. Did you notice how many times he spoke of my bread, my water, my flesh, my shearers? That is the natural man — taking all for himself. The spiritual man is what we just read: honoring Jehovah the Lord with his substance.

Turn over to 2 Corinthians, chapter eight, the opening verses:

"Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; how that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves, praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God."

Paul is making a collection here for the poorer saints in Jerusalem. The Macedonians had received spiritual benefit as Gentiles through Paul, a Jewish apostle. Now it was their turn. As he says in Romans: if you have reaped of our spiritual benefit, it is also in order that you return material things. That is a principle that should govern our lives — honoring the Lord with our substance.

And it is not the amount that matters. The Lord said the widow's two mites were just as important as all the abundance of the rich. He owns the cattle on a thousand hills — He needs nothing. We need everything. We are the dependent ones. But what a delight it is to His heart when we give Him the place and honor that belongs to His name.

Nabal was of the house of Caleb — and how important is our spiritual heritage. I think of our children and of what I once was as a young one. What do we do with the inheritance the Lord has given? Did Nabal not know what we just read in Deuteronomy — that his abundance was for Jehovah? I am sure he knew it. But just as we are by nature, we take all that is given to us and appropriate it for ourselves, instead of returning to the Lord the first fruits of all that we have received.

That is why it is needful during the week that we reap the harvest given to us in the Word of God. It has been said that every morning we wake up, we should have two things: Bible and breakfast — in that order. Every day we have a harvest coming, and the Lord wants us to bring Him the first fruits of all that we have — the best. He deserves it. He gave His life for us.

So Nabal was very prosperous. He had great possessions. But he was not in the place his father's house should have been. He had gone to Carmel — he was out of the will of God altogether.

Abigail: Understanding and Beauty

Now note the description of his wife. The text says Abigail was, first, a woman of good understanding, and second, of a beautiful countenance. The emphasis today is on outward beauty — but the Lord looks first for a woman of good understanding. That is what He looks for in our sisters.

Her name has an interesting meaning. Abba, as we know in Hebrew, means Father — and the name Abigail carries the sense of "father of consultation," or "exaltation of the Father." She was one who sought counsel and walked wisely. I believe that inner beauty shows in our sisters as well: when we walk with the Lord, we reflect His image.

David: The Fugitive King

We must remember that David here is a fugitive. He has not yet reigned. He will reign seven years in Hebron before he reigns in Jerusalem. He is under rejection as the anointed king of Israel, and his name means Beloved. Is he not a type of our Lord Jesus Christ — our Beloved, who is not yet reigning? We do not believe in the idea that Christ is currently on His own throne; as we read in Revelation, He is seated on His Father's throne. But He is our Beloved, our rejected King, and Saul is pursuing David even unto death.

God tests us in our response to His messengers.

David sends young men to Nabal with a greeting in his name, and the message is: "Peace, peace, peace." Three times — peace to him, peace to his house, peace to all that he has. What a picture:

- Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God (Romans 5:1).
- Committing all to Him — let your requests be made known to God with thanksgiving, and the peace of God shall be with you (Philippians 4).
- Walking in obedience — we shall enjoy the God of peace (Philippians 4).

Peace with God (Romans 5:1). The peace of God through committing our way to Him (Philippians 4). And in obedience, the God of peace Himself. Don't we want all three? I do.

The young men deliver their message. That is our message: preaching peace by Jesus Christ. He is Lord of all (Acts 10:36). David says, "Greet him in my name" — he is the proper king of Israel, even though he is not yet on his throne. The young men carry a message of peace to Nabal and his household.

Nabal's Response: Contempt for the King

When David's young men come and speak in his name, and they cease, Nabal answers with contempt: "Who is David? And who is the son of Jesse? There be many servants nowadays that break away from their masters. Shall I then take my bread and my water and my flesh and give it unto men whom I know not?" He brings David the anointed king down to the level of a common runaway servant.

What a serious thing it is when men bring our Lord down to their level — treating Him as one of us, a big brother, all on the same plane. And notice how many times Nabal says my. My bread. My water. My flesh.

Now contrast that with Abigail, who says "my lord, my lord, my lord" — everything is "my lord." Just the opposite of Nabal. Just the opposite.

No wonder David is angry. Though not yet on his throne, he is anointed. He and his men are going to take vengeance. And when you read in the Word of God the manner of that coming judgment, take for instance Revelation: "Hide us from the face of the Lamb, from the wrath of the Lamb." Whoever heard of a lamb being angry? And yet the Lord will be angry, and men will cry for the rocks to fall on them. But he who being often reprov'd hardens his neck shall suddenly be cut off and that without remedy.

Solemnly, in our own families we may see some who harden their hearts. It is a solemn thing for God to speak and for us not to listen.

The Servants' Testimony

The servants of Nabal's household bear good testimony. They come to Abigail and report what has happened: "The men were very good unto us and we were not hurt, neither missed we anything as long as we were with them in the fields. They were a wall unto us both by night and day." And then a warning: "Know now therefore and consider what thou wilt do, for evil is determined against our master and against all his household. For he is such a son of Belial that a man cannot speak to him."

Abigail's Offering: A Picture of Approach

In verse 18, Abigail makes haste and prepares an offering to David — just as in Deuteronomy 26. She prepares loaves, wine, dressed sheep, parched corn, raisins, and cakes of figs, and loads them on donkeys. In her behavior she is subject to the king even though he is not yet on his throne.

Is that not a picture of believers? We have something to offer to our Lord — out of the abundance we have received from Him. It may be only a little, but it is the first fruits.

She does not wait for David's judgment to fall. She goes out to meet it with an offering, seeking to avert it. We too recognize that judgment is coming — it is on its way. But God in His mercy holds it back, for He is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. We have family members who are not yet believers. The Lord is not willing that they should perish.

We are ambassadors of peace. The Lord sees our offering — He sees those who are not yet ready, and He waits.

Abigail at David's Feet: Confession and Intercession

When Abigail sees David, she dismounts from her donkey and falls at his feet. Notice that in verse 24 she says: "Upon me, my lord, upon me let this iniquity be." And notice she does not say "Nabal," but "thy handmaid." She is taking responsibility.

We think of the five offerings in Leviticus. One is the sin offering. When an Israelite brought a sin offering, the priest ate it in the holy place, taking upon himself the sin of the offerer. So Abigail is doing here — she is taking responsibility and bringing it to the king.

She acknowledges Nabal for what he is: "Nabal is his name, and folly is with him." The servants knew it. Abigail knew it. And do we know what kind of character the world is? They hate the name of our Lord Jesus, and they take everything for themselves: "I earned it. It is mine." But who gave them the strength to do it? Who gave them the job? Cities that were once thriving industries have become ghost towns because men took it all for themselves, refusing to recognize from whom the blessing came.

As Paul writes in Ephesians, in former days we were without God — practical atheists. But even creation testifies otherwise. Every time a chicken drinks water, it lifts its head. Someone once said: we farmers are surrounded by animals who, every time they eat, look up — but we sit down and just eat.

Abigail prays in verse 28: "I pray thee, forgive the trespass of thine handmaid." And then she gives the wonderful assurance: "The Lord will certainly make my lord a sure house, because my lord fighteth the battles of the Lord." She speaks of the bundle of life — the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with Jehovah thy God. And of his enemies, "them shall he sling out as out of the middle of a sling." She uses an image that David would well understand, for it was with a sling and one stone that he had felled Goliath. Did she know that? She uses that very metaphor.

And then, in verses 30 and 31, she says: "And it shall come to pass, when Jehovah shall have done to my lord according to all the good that he hath spoken concerning thee, and shall have appointed thee ruler over Israel, that this shall be no grief unto thee, neither offense of heart unto my lord, either that thou hast shed blood causeless, or that my lord hath avenged himself. But when Jehovah shall have dealt well with my lord, then remember thine handmaid."

There is a verse in the minor prophets: mercy rejoices over judgment. As a father, I have had to correct my children — and it was never pleasant. But it was necessary. One thinks of the Lord in heaven as He looks upon our state. And as Daniel prayed, we are able to say in our hearts: I have sinned. That is a very important attitude. People today think they are doing quite well. Where is the humbleness of heart to recognize our real condition?

The movement of gathering to the Lord's name was founded, first of all, on a recognition of the ruin of the church — not its triumph, but its ruin. We are in captivity, and we are part of it. As Nehemiah said: there we are, embodied in our people, under the nations. He recognized it as his own. So it is very important for us, like Abigail in her confession, to recognize that — and the Lord will show mercy. The dispensation of the grace of God is the longest of any dispensation that has been. God is long-suffering in mercy.

David's Response and Nabal's End

In verse 35, David receives what she has brought and says: "Go up in peace to thine own house; see, I have hearkened to thy voice and have accepted thy person." David would leave vengeance to God.

What of Nabal? Even then, God in His mercy gave him ten days. As a brother noted, people who are making merry — the next day the celebration is gone and there is only a hangover. So with Nabal: his heart died within him, but he had those ten days. Yet it was too late. And there will be a day when it will be too late. God is not mocked. A man sows what he shall also reap. He that sows to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that sows to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting.

After ten days, the Lord struck Nabal and he died. There is an old saying: when a rich man dies, how much did he leave behind? All of it. He takes nothing with him — only a never-dying soul. Death ends it all for the natural man. And after this, the judgment. As Hebrews says, it is appointed unto men once to die, after this the judgment. But notice a wonderful thing: in 1 Corinthians 3, among the list of things that are ours, death itself is listed. Death is no longer a terror to the believer — it is a servant. Paul says, "death is yours." I saw both my mother and father go to be with the Lord, and there was no terror. It was a home-call.

Abigail Becomes David's Wife

The latter part of the chapter tells us that Abigail became David's wife. Exaltation of the Father — she who honored God, not her husband — became the wife of David, the Beloved. Is that not a wonderful picture of what awaits us? The presence of the Lord, the marriage of the Lamb, and the supper that goes with it.

In verse 42: "And Abigail hasted and arose and rode upon a donkey, with five damsels of hers that went after her, and she went after the messengers of David, and became his wife."

I think of this especially for the next generation, because it is so easy to grow familiar with these things. I remember as a young one sitting at the table, thinking privately, I wish we could finish so I could go out and play with my friends. That was the natural man in me. I thank God the reading and prayer was not made short — because it was prayer being offered for all of us.

Closing: Grow in Grace and Knowledge

Let us see to it that when we reap the harvest of the Word of God, the end result is what 2 Peter calls for: grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. A great many Bible students know the Bible forward and backward — but that alone is not enough. Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

John writes to the fathers: "I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning." It does not say head knowledge — but knowing the Son as He walked here in His path of sojourn. That is how we learn of the Father, in reference to the Son. And I think the thought is going through the path that our Lord trod — not perfectly, but keeping Him before us. That is knowing the Father from the beginning.

Judah means praise, and when Israel went out to battle, Judah went first (Judges 1). Praise goes before knowledge — or better, praise arises out of knowledge and understanding. A song to the Lord for His deliverance and for who He is. "We have known him that is from the beginning." It takes a lifetime and all the experiences He puts us through before we might finally be conformed — as Romans 8 says — to the image of His Son. That is what He is looking for: a reflection of His image.

May the Lord bless this imperfect presentation and make it good to your souls.