

1 Samuel 25, Psalm 45 & Ephesians 5

Abigail: Faith in a Dark Day — David as Everything

Scripture Readings

“Upon me, my Lord, upon me let this iniquity be.” — 1 Samuel 25:24

“The soul of my Lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the Lord thy God.” — 1 Samuel 25:29

“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me.” — 1 Samuel 25:32

“Thou art fairer than the sons of men; grace is poured into thy lips.” — Psalm 45:2

“He is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, yea, this is my friend.” — Song of Solomon 5:16

“Be filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves in songs and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and chanting with your heart to the Lord.” — Ephesians 5:18–19

Faith in a Dark Day

This was a dark time in Israel’s history. Saul was on the throne outwardly, and outwardly he seemed to prosper. But he had slain the priests of the Lord. The prophet and the priest — Abiathar — had fled to David in the wilderness, where he was pursued by the reigning king. Whenever, in Scripture, the darkness has been at its deepest, it is worth noting how often God has used a woman, and specifically noted her faith. We think of Hannah, of Deborah in the time of the

judges, of Anna in Luke 2, of Mary of Bethany. And we think of Abigail, who may well be described as the Mary of Bethany of the Old Testament.

She had a faith that, on this occasion, surpassed David's. She had a consciousness — an understanding of God's mind concerning David — that the rejected king himself, in his anger over Nabal's rebuff, had momentarily lost sight of. And it was her faith that preserved him.

She Made Haste

The word used three times in this chapter of Abigail is that she hasted. She hasted. When she heard what Nabal had done and what David was coming to do, the first thing she did was not to sit and plan, or to try to work around it herself, or to get upset. She made haste to David. Faith seeks the Lord first. It hurries to Him. The question we can ask ourselves is whether that is the first thing we do — whether we hasten to our David before we do anything else.

She brought what she could — two hundred loaves, two bottles of wine, five dressed sheep, five measures of parched corn, a hundred clusters of raisins, two hundred cakes of figs. David had six hundred men. You might think the numbers ought to be larger, more complete. But the Lord's estimation of this kind of offering is not based on its appearing to be enough. Mark 14 speaks of the woman who broke the alabaster box: she did what she could. Mr Kelly said of Abigail that she sent a munificent offering, yet owning it unworthy of him. She brought what she had, and it is recorded in the Scriptures.

Taking the Low Place

When Abigail saw David coming down against her, she got off her donkey and fell before him on her face, bowing herself to the ground. She fell at his feet. She could not get any lower. And she said: "Upon me, my Lord, upon me let this iniquity be." Later: "I pray thee, forgive the trespass of thine handmaid." She

took the guilt upon herself, as Daniel, Ezra, and Nehemiah confessed the sin of the nation as if it were their own, though they were not personally guilty. This was a woman of humility, bearing what was not hers to bear in order to shield her Lord from doing what would grieve Him afterward.

David was going to avenge himself. He had a just cause — he had protected Nabal's shepherds and flocks without ever taking so much as one animal, and Nabal had thrown it all back in his face with contempt. But Romans 12 is clear: avenge not yourselves; vengeance is mine, saith the Lord. Abigail understood this better than David did in that moment. She knew that it would be contrary to the grace of God for the coming king to shed blood like this. She had a consciousness of God's counsels concerning David that, in his anger, David himself had temporarily laid aside.

And God used her faith to preserve him. The very words she spoke showed what was in her heart: "The soul of my Lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the Lord thy God." She knew who he was. She knew what God had said about him. And she knew that the coming of vengeance was not his to take.

David Was Everything to Her

Fourteen times Abigail addressed David as "my Lord." Twice seven — twice the number of perfection. That was her estimation of him. She also spoke of Jehovah seven times in the same account. And David gives her a triple blessing: blessed be the Lord God of Israel who sent thee; blessed be thy advice; blessed be thou.

J.N.D. put it this way: Saul is but a man. Samuel was gone from the scene. What remained? David — God's chosen king. And nothing else remained for a faith that truly apprehended God's mind. Abigail understood this. The assembly, Darby wrote, should think as God thinks in spite of existing circumstances. That is what she did. She did not look at the outward state of things — David in rejection, a fugitive in the wilderness, Saul on the throne, Samuel dead. She

looked at what God had said, and it was David. David was everything to her.

Jonathan was David's friend, and a closer friend than many. But Jonathan went back to the old order. He identified himself with Saul rather than with David in rejection. Abigail did not. When Nabal died and David sent for her, she hasted — again — to go to him. She left behind whatever comfort and security Nabal's household had offered, and went to David in the wilderness. She identified herself with the rejected one. Her name, Abigail, speaks of the exaltation of the Father — and when she became the bride of David, such is our portion: to exalt the Father and to become the bride of the Son of the Father.

The Heart Engaged: Psalm 45 and Song of Solomon 5

What characterised Abigail was not cleverness or strategy. A merely cunning woman, seeing a warlord heading her way, might have gone out to pacify him with gifts. But what Abigail brought out of her mouth was the language of someone who had been thinking about David for a long time. Her understanding of who he was, and what God's purposes were concerning him, could not have been formed in a moment. It was the overflow of a heart long engaged with him.

Psalm 45 says: "My heart is welling forth with a good matter." That is what a heart full of its object does — it wells forth. It cannot help it. And the one who speaks of her beloved in Song of Solomon 5 has been thinking about him at length: his head as finest gold, his locks flowing, his eyes as doves by the water brooks, his bearing as Lebanon, his mouth most sweet — yea, he is altogether lovely. These comparisons are not idle. They come from someone who has been occupied with him. A cedar of Lebanon — tall, straight, regal, the most kingly of trees — is not the first image that comes to mind for someone who has barely considered the person. These thoughts have taken up residence.

That is what the Lord would have from us. Not occasional appreciation. Not a general acknowledgement of His worth. But the overflow of a heart that has been

occupied with Him — so fully occupied that when it opens, what comes out is: he is altogether lovely, this is my beloved, this is my friend.

Be Filled with the Spirit: Ephesians 5

The world knows how to fill a heart. The sports fanatic fills his mind with statistics, with the record of every game, with the performance of every player. The whole project of the enemy is to fill men's minds with something — anything — so that they do not think about God. Sport, entertainment, drink, distraction — the form changes, the purpose is the same.

The apostle's answer in Ephesians 5 is: "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and chanting with your heart to the Lord, giving thanks at all times for all things." Abigail, before she met David, had her heart full of him. When she saw him coming, it welled forth in those fourteen 'my Lord's and in that understanding of God's purposes that saved David from himself. So too, if we are filled with the Spirit, if the hymns and the psalms and the spiritual songs are in our hearts as we go about our daily lives, it will show.

We have a rich heritage of hymns — not light and frothy things, but careful, deep thoughts of the Lord composed by men whose hearts were taken up with Him. They are the psalms and hymns and spiritual songs that can be in our hearts while we mow the lawn or drive to work. Not performed publicly — the apostle says it is to the Lord. The Lord is the knower of hearts. How wonderful if the Lord searches my heart and finds it full of hymns about Himself.

We are, as the Lord's people today, a small and insignificant company. We can easily be taken up with the signs of the times, with the approach of tribulation, with the stage being set for judgment on this earth. And there is a place for that. But may we not forget David. May we not be looking for His coming because of the signs rather than because of Himself. The Lord Jesus is still altogether lovely.

His worth has not diminished because Christianity has failed. God's estimate of Christ is unchanged. And so should mine be. May David — may our Lord — be everything to us.

“He is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, yea, this is my friend.” — Song of Solomon 5:16