

Let's open our Bibles tonight to 1 Samuel 25 as we continue our study through God's Word.

Tonight we continue our story of David, God's chosen king who is ruling from exile and on the run for his life with about six hundred men in tow that are learning from David to trust the God of Israel. If you haven't been with us, Saul has been replaced. He is still alive. He is still refusing to go away, but go away he will soon enough. But it caused David - a young man who is in his early 20's, running for his life, called by the LORD to be king - to spend seven-and-a-half years of his life in hiding. What a calling. Right? You're going to be the king of Israel eventually, but you're going to start by running.

In chapter 20, a few weeks ago, Saul's intention to kill David had become clear. Jonathan actually had learned that from his father and went to tell David as well. David ran to Samuel, who was an old-time prophet. (We are going to read of his death tonight in verse 1.) But Samuel has been around for sixty years bringing God's Word to a largely unconcerned populace. The nation didn't really want to hear much from God, yet Samuel is the first national prophet, if you will, that the nation has, and it is to him that David ran, there in the Ramah area where he lived. There was a school of the prophets there. Saul sent three different groups of guys to arrest David, to get rid of him; all three of them, under the power of the Holy Spirit, just fell down and began to prophesy, unable to lay their hands on David. Finally Saul came himself. But, just like the groups of men that he sent, he fell under the power of God's Spirit, laid for a day and a night before the LORD while David was able to escape. And it should have, I guess, taught David that he wasn't to fear; God was going to take care of him.

Which doesn't explain, at all, chapter 21 which follows where David, in a panic, realizing he is now on Saul's list, runs in fear, heads for the Philistine cities, goes by Nob (which is the place of the priests, where they lived), speaks to Ahimelech - the high priest, takes the bread from him from the tabernacle, gathers Goliath's sword, and runs off to the city of Gath. Crazy fear. It is Goliath's hometown. David's carrying a sword. You know that's not gonna go well. But in chapter 20 he should have learned God has a way of humbling even His enemies. Yet, in chapter

21, David has forgotten that lesson. He has to act insane as he's arrested. The king shakes his head and lets him go. David heads back to the caves of Adullam, which is a place on the border with Judah, where he restores his walk with the LORD and apologizes, really, for going in that direction at all, trusting in himself. He wrote Psalm 34 and Psalm 56 and Psalm 57, Psalm 142 there as well; their headers are that which describe that place. So those would be good ones to read in the context. God begins to bring David this army of faithful men who aren't really faithful people; they're kind of the outcasts of society. But they gather to David and begin to learn of God's goodness.

In chapter 22, we see the consequences of David's panic as Saul orders the death not only all of the priests that live in Nob (some eighty-five of them) but literally all of their families and their livestock and their children as well. It is a horrible consequence. Abiathar, who is the only son left of the high priest, escapes to become David's high priest to serve with David.

In chapter 23, David, the king in exile, twice goes to save people (that were the Jews) from the Philistines who are robbing them and using them, taking their food and all. But both times that he went and risked his life, the people of these cities and the towns - one of them his own people, from Judah - turned him in to Saul, let him know that he was hiding amongst them, and David had to twice run for his life and had to deal with this betrayal as well. It was an extremely difficult time. But the people were more afraid of Saul than they were of David or his goodness to them.

In chapter 24 last week, David then met Saul, by the providence of God, in a cave. Saul was wanting to get out of the heat. David's still on the run, probably two-and-a-half years in or so, in En Gedi. It's 100 degrees. There's no shade. And he taught us last week how you could listen for the LORD's voice. It looked like a perfect setup for Saul to be taken out of the way. The men with David encouraged him to do it. They were determined that that was what God wanted. David ultimately realized it wasn't; that doing it the hard way was still the right way, and he was not going to lay his hand on God's anointed. He let Saul walk out and walk away, only to run back again to the desert in hiding.

Which brings us to this chapter - we won't be able to do this every week, but for now - which is ironic because here David is about to fall for an act of violence and of vengeance, which is, by comparison to what you read in the last chapter, an

extremely small, irritating situation. This was a guy that wasn't very thankful, was very ungrateful, was publicly humiliating to David. But it wasn't Saul. It wasn't a guy out to kill him with three thousand of his best soldiers. So we get some facts in this chapter about our dark side. You know you have a dark side? You have a dark side. You've seen Star Wars. But it's cool to know that, even in the dark side, God has a way of moving in and protecting you from your own ignorance and from your own sinfulness. And that's really the lesson today.

We've mentioned to you a couple of times, but I want to mention it again, when you read narrative in the Bible - which is just the reporting of stories - God gives you a lot to go with, but you don't get all of the things filled in that you'd like. But He gives you enough to learn the lesson. This is all you get. You can ask all the questions you like, but they don't have answers. Why didn't that guy come sooner? Why did he wait so long? All the things we can't answer. But what we have, we can run with.

And David's life is certainly instructive to us if for no other reason than God gives us His complete picture. He doesn't just go, "Here's David, our hero, look at him shine." He says, in chapter 25, "Look at David, our hero that's about to do the dumbest thing imaginable." Well, look at our hero (in chapter 21) running in fear, causing the death of hundreds. That's also our hero, but he fails in more ways than one. So you get the good and the not-so-good, the bright side and the dark side. To David's favor - and I want you to keep an eye on it - is David's softness of heart. Because literally every time but two he is very quick to forgive, to ask for forgiveness, to restore, to admit sin, to own up to his own failure, and to seek God for restoration. So David's not immune from temptation, and in this case it's taking personal vengeance for something that was done wrong to him and to his people. But David's growing. In the midst of this, he's growing. He's getting ready to be king. So this is a process of growth where you have a hiccup now and again. Maybe you have those in your life sometimes where, "Hey, man, look. I fell way back." No. You just stumbled. Now you get up, and you get moving again. With our flesh, we're never out of the woods. And I suspect a couple of things happen. Number one - if you run for a few years from someone that's looking to kill you, you get a lot of pent-up frustration, I think, and anger. Secondly, from verse 1, his best friend (and the guy he looked to for years), Samuel, dies. And so David is kind of just...he can't get to Saul's son anymore. We don't really have any record of them gathering together anymore for encouragement. David's been chased and not able to lash out. But sometimes you just feel like you've gotta do something. And then

he loses his mentor, if you will, as well. I'm not makin' excuses for what we're about to read. I'm just saying that this explosion has some explanation, I guess, behind it. As David and his six hundred men in Judah are looking to survive Saul's constant onslaught, David is not sitting around. He's not just fishing. He is risking his life and that of others to protect the farmers and the herdsman in the desert from the Philistines, whose frequent incursions into Israel made that trade uncertain and certainly very dangerous. So David is the police source, right now, for the entire nation against their enemies, and he's doing that out of the limelight. But it's something that we read here and we will read in other places.

In that setting, David is confronted by what I think you have to describe by context as a minor trial. It was the need to overcome evil with good. It was the need to let God handle it, as he had in the last chapter. But instead David blows his stack. He goes looking to get even. He swears great evil upon this man who had done him and his band of men wrong. And he was determined to see it through. What Jesus warned us about (in Matthew 26:41), where He said, "Watch and pray, that you don't fall into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is" what? "weak," is exactly what this chapter is all about. So, it's a moment of crisis. A judgment has to be made. David made it correctly in the cave last week, standing firm in the LORD despite the counsel of all of his buddies to the contrary. Here, he completely loses his mind. It's like the up's and the down's, for sure. But the ways of our flesh, I think, are set before us. They're unpredictable. You can't swear, "We're never gonna do this again," because look at David having to fight this fight with his old nature. There's an interesting verse - I'm not pulling it out of context although the context is a little questionable in the Song of Solomon - but there's a verse in chapter 2:15 that says, "The little foxes will spoil the vine." In other words, we usually do pretty well in big trials. Right?

After you get to know the LORD, and you're walking with God, you usually can survive the big things. But it's the little things. Right? It's the day-to-day irritants, the small challenges to our walks that sometimes are the most revealing. You probably won't stumble in the big things. But stumbling in the little things - where we're not forced to really rely on God's grace as much as we might in another situation - can be a huge dilemma. So that's where we're overcome. That's where David finds himself tonight - overcome. To David, Saul was the king. He sat in the place of God's anointing. Only God could remove him. That's the big thing. With David's response to this defiant, kind of petulant, farmer - to David, he was a nobody. Oh, he was willing to give his life to protect him; but when it came to him

dealing with this, his question doesn't become, "Let God handle it." His question becomes, "Who does he think he is, treating me like this? After all that I've done for him."

In chapter 24, David says of Saul, "I'm gonna let God deal with you." He says it twice. In chapter 24, that's what he says of Saul. But in this chapter, God is not even mentioned; not at least early on. David is gonna handle this himself. So it's the story of Nabal and Abigail. It's the story of the wrath of David and the grace of God. And we learn, I think, hopefully tonight in these few verses, that we are going to need far more than just simple deliverance from our outward enemy - that's who Saul really is. We're really going to need victory over the internal battles with the flesh. Because that's where maturity starts. Right? The big things go away. I remember when I got saved I quit doing drugs, I quit swearing a lot. I didn't say I stopped yet, but I quit swearing a lot. It was some of those first things that go, man. You get cleaned up. But all that other stuff - your anger, your bitterness, your retaliation, pride - those things, they take a lot longer to leave than the pot smokin' in the morning or the swearing at somebody in the car. You know, the outward gets cleaned up fairly quickly. But, man, the heart takes a long time. So here's David learning to grow from within. But it's going to take a tough lesson.

Verse 1 says this, "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." God begins this chapter by giving us a very short comment on the death of Samuel, who is really the "John the Baptist" of the Old Testament in the sense that he links the last of the judges with the prophetic office. He'd been around for six decades. We read about his miraculous birth, his calling and all in the first couple of chapters of this book. He was buried in his home which, by the way, is very prevalent in the Old Testament. You will find most of the folks are buried on their own properties. Manasseh - 2 Kings 21:18 - was buried in his own flower bed which is, I think, where "pushing up the daisies" came from. I don't know, but I'm pretty sure it's a biblical idea. We read that the people sorrowed over Samuel, which is interesting because they could have cared less about him when he was alive. They needed him. God knows they needed the Word of God. But other than a few folks, nobody seemed to care. They gave him lip service and nodded in his direction, but a lot of folks really weren't listening; and yet they went through the lamenting part of his death, if you will. But we get this at the front end of the story of Nabal and Abigail, which is interesting to me

that the LORD would say, "Oh, by the way, Samuel's dead, and now here's the story." So, I want to attach them to, for some reason, as to how this might have affected David. The only thing we read about David was he went further into the Sinai than he had been for quite some time. The word "Paran" means cavern. It is a sparsely-populated area. It is where much of the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness during those forty years with Moses. David felt safer there, but the enemy is never far behind when you're serving the LORD. And so it was here, though, in this place - Paran - that David and his men began to protect the shepherds who kept their sheep out in the wilderness; even though they lived in town, they raised their sheep there in the wilderness. And it is there that he protected the sheep of a guy named Nabal. He was a very wealthy man. He lived in Maon near Carmel (not Mount Carmel; Carmel is in the south, Mount Carmel is in the north).

He is described, in this way here in verse 2 and in verse 3. It says, "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." So, Nabal. Nabal means, in Hebrew, "fool." But it doesn't really mean "fool." It really means "stupid fool." It's a real harsh epitaph, if you will, that you would say to somebody. So Nabal, "stupid fool," comes and he goes in the story that God sets before us in one chapter. He's a rich guy, he's a harsh guy, he's an evil man. He was a man of great confidence. He mistreated people; saw no need for the LORD. I think every society has a Nabal - overbearing to their inferiors, intolerable when he is prosperous, drunk often (as we'll read), horrible husband, a real bully; yet somebody who would die in great fear. He is also from the house of Caleb, the degenerate (kind of) branch of the noble vine. He'd fallen a long way from the family tree; let's put it that way. On the other hand, his wife, Abigail - by the way, her name's beautiful, it means "her father's joy" - was beautiful, had a good understanding of things. The word "understanding" refers not only to intelligence but to morality. So you get the picture. How many Abigails do you know that end up with guys like Nabal? I know several of them. I suspect it is by parental arrangement at the time; you wouldn't have known that going in. But here's a picture of a godly wife with a very unbelieving husband, and yet she can maintain her godliness and her beauty and her humility. She is Nabal's greatest asset - his wife.

So it is sheep shearing time. We read that, there in verse 4, "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." Sheep shearing was a time of harvest; it was a time of joy. It's a time when you were counting the good fortune that you had, and this guy had a lot - three thousand sheep, many laborers with him, lots of provision for them in the desert. And we will read, as we go, that David had risked life and limb to be sure that these three thousand sheep (during this time) were not robbed or killed or taken by anyone. David, notice in verse 4, knowing it was that time of year, sends some of his young men - ten of them in all - to basically ask Nabal to pay for the protection. Now this isn't a shakedown. This isn't protection money, if you will. On the other hand, David had risked life and limb for this man. He'd gotten all of his sheep back, and that was a tough thing to do in those days. And so it was a polite request, it was a humble request. There was no number attached. "Whatever comes to your hand, whatever you think it's worth, whatever you think you would like to share" - there was no demand for a certain fee; there was an unwritten rule that farmers would pay from the flocks those who had helped them keep their flocks. And so David - all he's doing is trying to feed six hundred guys and their wives in the wilderness; serving, as he could, on the run. Not an easy way to keep that all going. Notice also that David told the men to mention his name specifically so that at least he, if not others, understood David's genuineness, his honesty. He had a reputation. He had killed Goliath. He was on the run. This wasn't done in secret. And so apparently Nabal knew of David and David felt knew him enough to recognize the claims of his men - that they were honest claims and that he wasn't trying to take anything from him. In fact, notice, he says, in verse 5, "Just greet him in my name. He'll remember me. I'm sure it'll be just fine." So the young men that David sent did exactly what they were told.

Verse 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. 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." Now, Nabal denies even knowing David's name; calls someone he doesn't know "a servant who broke away from his master," which is interesting. It's kind of like he's a Saul supporter, isn't he? He wears a Saul hat, implying that David is a rebel, he broke away from serving, he's not to be trusted, he's a renegade, he has no recourse, he has no rights. Not only was Nabal lying about knowing David; now he's insulting him as well, and he's demeaning him. Apparently Nabal felt that since David and his men were fugitives, he could use them any way he liked and maybe ignore them in the process as well. What could they do about it anyway? File a complaint with King Saul? Oh, that'll be funny. And so he just sends these ten boys packing. And I must say, in verse 12, they do act commendably because at least, as far as I could see, these six hundred men that were with David were not guys that were peacemakers initially; they liked to just mix it up. They were always suggesting that fighting was their first line of defense. And yet somehow this drunken loudmouth Nabal - this "stupid fool" - doesn't get that reaction from them. I like the words they "turned on their heels." They just turned around, went, "I'm gonna tell David. This is not gonna go well for you." But they didn't take it on themselves. So they were learning, I think, from David that the LORD could be trusted. They didn't react normally, I should say fleshly-wise, but they did go back to David to report what they had heard.

Verse 13 says, "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" (of the six hundred) "men went with David, and two hundred stayed with the supplies." David turns red, yells, "Get your swords," and he heads off in the direction of this lying, ungrateful, good-for-nothin', "stupid fool." I think I'm reading that correctly. This isn't exactly the lesson that these mighty men of David's needed to learn. They actually seemed to do better on their own than they were doing now with David. This was more like their old life. This is vengeance, this is anger, this is, "I'm gonna go take care of business." On the way, we are told in a couple of verses - down in verse 21 or verse 22 (and we'll read it now), "Now David had said," (this is referring back to his travels), " '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. 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.' " Yeah, that's not good. "So I'm gonna slaughter everything that

moves around him, this ungrateful guy who isn't thankful, who pays me back for me risking my life and these six hundred men risking their lives for us." I want you to notice - because it's narrative and you should look at everything that you're given - that you're not told anything about David praying, asking the LORD what to do, calling for the priest so he could bring the answer from the LORD - the ephod. "Bring me the ephod. I want to know what to do to this lying, stupid fool." No praying at all. No stopping to consider what he should do, no counting to ten. (Pastor Jack laughs.) That's not gonna help, but he didn't do that either. Just an angry rush for vengeance over insults received. David could have learned by now that God can handle this kind of stuff. But then so can we, and yet I suspect that sometimes we end up in the same place, where, "LORD, I'll be right back." I remember goin' on a date when I was 19 or 18, maybe 18, when I first got saved, anyway, and asking the LORD to stay home. (Laughing) You know, the LORD goes with you to everything. And so I'd say, "LORD, don't go with me tonight. Just stay here. I'll be back by 2:00. Honest. I'll be all right." Because I didn't want the LORD to go where I was goin'. I was younger then.

So David, at this point, could care less about his commitment to the LORD. Nabal has gotten the best of him; something, apparently, even Saul was unable to do. This second-rate despicable weasel was another story for David. After David had willingly protected his goods from the Philistines, here's the deal: David had been honorable, he'd been kind, he'd been serving under the harshest of conditions. And what he got was ingratitude. But even more than that, it was coupled with gross injustice. Not thankful and not fair. Hard to deal with.....even if you're King David. Yet that's exactly where, in our narrative, God has placed David and sometimes will place us so that we might learn to act in faith; just to do the right thing. David doesn't take it like Job did. When Job heard the reports of his children, and his wife suggested that they "curse God and die!" (Job 2:9), it was Job who said to his wife, early on, "You're speaking like a foolish woman. Should we accept good from God's hands and not accept adversity?" (Job 2:10). In other words, sometimes God just puts us in a place we don't understand, but He's still in charge. And then you read (in Job 2:10) it written, "In all of these things Job did not sin with his lips." In other words, what Job said wasn't sinful; it was right. It was the right position to take. David is not adopting that position. Instead he would put God on hold, run off to make everyone pay - along with four hundred men who loved him, would die for him - and was about to even chastise a man that had offended him by killing all of the innocent people around him. And the Holy Spirit records it all for us to consider. David, for a moment, sets faith aside and won't really follow through on

letting God have the last word. Do you remember when the boys (and Peter is always the example of the boys) saw the army coming to arrest Jesus in the Garden that Peter pulled out a sword? Taking on maybe a thousand guys. I don't know how he does it, but that's how anger is. It makes you dumb. And the LORD said to Peter, there (John 18:11), "Put away your sword. Aren't I supposed to drink the cup which the Father has given to Me?" In other words, "This is the place I'm supposed to be." And this is the place David was supposed to be, but, boy, his reaction was not at all what it should be. Fortunately, when we're that dumb, God oftentimes comes to our aid. Even despite us, He saves us. Right? He doesn't just.....it's like your kids. You just told them to stay out of there, and then, at the last minute, you rescue them even though they're gonna fall headfirst into the pool or something. "I got ya!" You just want to let 'em fall in and go, "See?" But that's not really a good way to teach 'em, so you rescue them at the last minute. And God has a way of doing that with us, and He certainly has a way of doing that with David here. There's a way where He just kind of comes to our aid and delivers us. And I love the picture of the LORD coming to our help. So, David comes to the edge where Satan can mess with him, and God steps in to protect David from himself. And it's done in a very natural way. You wouldn't say, "Well then the LORD stepped in." Well, something happened. Those with spiritual eyes see God at work, certainly.

So a servant of Nabal hears of David's coming and goes to the lovely, beautiful, well-understanding Mrs. Nabal - Abigail, we'll call her - hoping that she might stop an army and their leader from their angry intentions, that of making things right. We read, in verse 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. 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.'" God's intersection. He faithfully tells Abigail how faithful David and his men had been, to the extent of staying up night and day for weeks at a time to protect the flock; how her husband had offended David; how he had rebuffed their servants and belittled them, spoke evil to them. And Nabal was now on David's list. And the young man says, "I don't know how to stop him, but they're going there now. He's such a scoundrel. I don't know how to speak to him.

I can't stop this. I'm not in a position to say anything to him. One cannot speak to him."

We read, in verse 18, "Then Abigail" (the smart, good-lookin', wise, godly woman) "made haste and took two hundred loaves of bread," (you see, they were rich and had lots of responsibilities to have that much 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" (not to one but multiple) "donkeys. And she said to her servants, 'Go on before me; see, I am coming after you.' But she did not tell her husband Nabal," the "stupid fool." 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." So this was pretty close to disaster. Abigail's response was that she believed her husband could do this kind of dumb stuff. She loads up with food. She sends her servant, hoping to slow David down a little bit, said, "I'll be right behind you." Doesn't tell her husband. And she's off to stop a murder! His! And she finds David and his men one hill away and closing in.

Verse 21, "Now David had said," (and we just read a moment ago about how they had protected this man, and this is how he repays him - evil for good, and) "I'm gonna destroy everything that moves in his life, every man around him by morning light." So that was David, steaming, coming down the hill, Abigail going up the hill. Verse 23, "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.' " It does seem - because of verses 21 and 22 - David hadn't cooled down. Time hadn't healed any wounds. He felt he had wasted his kindness on this man. He had served him faithfully. All the while Saul is looking to kill him. The Philistines are looking to kill him, and David was just trying to feed his group. David had a heart for the people. He felt obligated, but this was as bad as you could get. So, David isn't adopting, if you will, any heart, if you will, for the LORD here. He isn't tenderhearted. He isn't blessing those who hurt him. He's not blessing his enemies, praying for those that despitefully are using him. He's got premeditated murder on his mind, and God alone could stop him. So, he was angry.

On the verge of committing this horrible crime that would cast a huge shadow over his life in the years to come, here comes God's mercy in the form of a beautiful,

wise and intelligent lady - the person of Abigail. She's brave, she's decisive, she moves quickly. She would keep David from the sorrow and the shame and the disgrace of what he was about to do because here's David - fleshed out - and there's the LORD protecting David. So notice, from verse 23 and verse 24, that Abigail shows this tremendous humility. She doesn't get off her donkey rebuking David for what he was about to do. She doesn't meet anger with anger and hatred with hatred. She wants to refocus his attention on the LORD whom he served. And so she does so humbly, by falling before him.

She says, in verse 25, " 'Please, let not my lord regard this scoundrel Nabal. For as his name is, so is he: ' " ("he's a stupid fool") " '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.' " "Nabal is as his name implies. He's not singling you out for abuse. He's stupid to everyone. That's just who he is. He's a son of Belial." The word "scoundrel" is the word "Belial" in your Bibles. "I did not see you when the men arrived, or I would have gladly rewarded your faithful servants for taking care of our sheep and shepherds all year long."

So she says to David, after pleading that he would listen to her, verse 26, " 'Now therefore, my lord, as the LORD lives' " (Jehovah) " '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.' " She suggests to David that her coming to stop him in his tracks was the work of God that would bless him. "Since the LORD has stopped you in your tracks from killing somebody and shedding innocent blood, ta da, I'm here." She saw it as the hand of God at work. "And keeping you from sin, thank God He is stopping you from seeking vengeance with your own hand. My prayer is that your enemies would all become fools like my husband is a fool. But don't you be one of those fools. David, let God handle it. He stopped you. Think about what you're heading for and what you're planning to do." Time out.

She says, in verse 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. 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,' " (Jehovah) " '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.' " She suggests to David, "Here's the food, forgive any ills that you've received from my family, and, look, I know, like everyone knows, God's called you to be the king; that you are going to rule and reign, your reputation is solid, you're fighting the LORD's battles - not for yourself like Saul; you have a good reputation. Don't lose all of that over the battle with this fool that has so abused you. God will keep you, David." And then, very poetically, she says, "You're kind of bound in the bundle of the living that the LORD is caring for, but Saul and your enemies, like Nabal, are going to be slung out as in the middle of a sling. God will swiftly deal with them. Don't you handle it. Let God handle it." Great lesson! Amazing picture just to see her speaking so wisely to this man that is so angry.

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 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.' " "When God makes you king, and He will do that as He has said, then, look, if I can keep you from what you're about to do, then it's not going to haunt you. No grief, no sorrow, no guilt for shedding innocent blood, no guilt for avenging yourself." She is a bold, wonderful woman with great spiritual insights. "Do what's right, David." Isn't it nice to have fellowship? People sometimes say, "I don't need to go to church to be saved." I think you do.....to say well.....well, you'll get to heaven, I guess, but you'll stink when you get there. I don't know if stinking is the right word. We need help to do well. We need accountability. "So, David, show up as a king without regrets, and don't let your past behavior become a stumbling block to you." I think if you keep that in mind, then you're protected from a lot of sins of vengeance. Right? We live in a culture that everyone wants to get even. We'll just let God fight our battles.

We read, in verse 32, "Then David said to Abigail: ' " ("Get out of my way, woman!" No, that's not at all what he said.) He says this, " '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!' " He was determined. Verse 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.' " Now, we mentioned to you earlier tonight David stands out because he's quick to repent, quick to admit fault, quick to seek God's judgment - most of the time. Not with Bathsheba; that took over a year. And when we get to that, we can look at how come that took so long. But, needless to say, that's usually not the case with David. David, in front of four hundred of his men, is humbled by a woman with the Word of God. And it's okay with David. He's immediately willing to recognize in heart that God had just spared him from a huge mistake. He blesses the LORD for sending her. He blesses her for coming. He blesses her for her advice. And he even says to her, "You came just in the nick of time because nothing else was going to stop me. But you've stopped me." And he realized that the LORD had stepped in. What is that Scripture in Proverbs 25 that says a wise rebuker is like gold earrings to an obedient ear (verse 12)? I think it just makes you beautiful. Right? You hear the counsel of the LORD, and it keeps you. In Psalm 141:5 (I wrote this in my Bible), "Let the righteous strike me; it shall be a kindness. And let him rebuke me; it shall be as excellent oil; let my head not refuse it. For still my prayer is against the deeds of the wicked." But let me be corrected and be teachable and have a spirit that is able to hear wise counsel; especially when your emotions have gotten the better of you like David, and it's clouded your judgment. It's a pretty good lesson. But it's David. He receives counsel. He praises the LORD, "Thank You, God, for keeping me from the evil I intended to do." I love the fact that God watches your steps. It was Job who said, in chapter 13:27, "He watches closely all of my paths." Even when you're being foolish. I like that because I used to try to pressure myself into, "You can do it! Just try a little harder." And the bottom line is if I could try a little harder and do better, I don't need the LORD. But because I can't, I need Him constantly. There's the Scripture in Proverbs 4:12 that says, "When you walk, your steps will not be hindered, and when you run, you will not stumble." When you seek God first. Beautiful.

Well, verse 36 (to come to the conclusion of the whole deal, now), "Now Abigail went to Nabal, and there he was, holding a feast in his house, like the feast of a king." In other words, he could afford to pay David and his men, but he was unwilling. "And Nabal's heart was merry within him, for he was very drunk;" (not just drunk, very drunk) "therefore she told him nothing, little or much, until morning light. 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. Then it happened, after about ten days, that the LORD struck Nabal, and he died." We don't always read in the Bible that the scales are balanced

quickly. We usually read that God waits a long time and gives you opportunity to repent. But I guess Nabal was just about at the end of his opportunity. So, here's God's providence in dealing in the affairs of men. We all believe in future, I think, retribution. Here, you read about it on the earth, and it happened pretty quickly. Ten days (Pastor Jack draws his hand across his throat). David like this (Pastor Jack motions like washing his hands of something), "Thank You, LORD. This guy was a real jerk." Cain murders Abel but then has to confess that his life is.... "My punishment's more than I can bear" (Genesis 4:13). He went through life totally suffering. Noah is delivered from God's judgment. Pharaoh drowns. Sometimes God does quickly make judgment; sometimes not so quickly. Not all of God's justice will be found in this life. But I think enough of it is in the Bible to assure you that it's coming. If it hasn't come, it will. You'll not be able to make a biblical case for, "Well, the LORD let that slide permanently." No. Nothing slides permanently. So if He doesn't deal with it now, He'll deal with it later. Notice, in verse 36, that Nabal has a very false sense of security. I think of that verse in Ecclesiastes 8:11 that says this, "Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." In other words, God just waits. But by the time God judges, you have no excuse. You've had every opportunity. That's usually the way it goes. Well, here's Nabal. He is at an expensive, drunken party with men that were hungry who he would not feed. He refuses the waters of life. He settles for the drunkenness of sin. He's out of it. He's got no clue at how much trouble he had been in. His wife is smart enough to just not talk to him when he was drunk. And I think that's always good counsel. "My husband's drunk. I tried to witness to him." Probably not the right time. Not probably gonna hear you. We have people sometimes counseling that come in just plastered. "Hey, I wanna talk to a pastor" (Pastor Jack slurs the words). "Yeah, you can come back when you're normal." So Abigail's counsel was wise. In the morning, she goes up, sits down with him and says, "Here's what happened yesterday." He hears how close he was to just getting wiped out, falls into a coma, ten days later is dead. I don't know if he had a stroke, if he had a heart attack. Not sure. But this is the second death in the chapter. Samuel lived this wonderful life - sixty years fruitful. And now Nabal, who has absolutely nothing to show for his life as far as I can tell. He shows up, and he leaves. God's judgment was quick. There was no need for vengeance. God will repay. By the way, that's a truth that's constantly repeated in the Scriptures. "I will repay says the LORD." Learn that well. It'll keep you from doin' the wrong thing. Deuteronomy 32:35, Romans 12:19, Hebrews 10:30. It's the same thing. When the LORD repeats Himself, you should

really pay attention. So he dies. And the LORD strikes him, and he died ten days later. So, I don't know what the ten days was all about, but there you go.

We have one final part of the story. Verse 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." Notice that David was not heartbroken at Nabal's death, but he did learn something important: God would have the last word. And I think that's the important part of the verse. "God has kept me from doing the wrong thing, and He's taken care of the issue that I was going to take care of for Him." But David is so impressed with this woman that he just.....there aren't that many good women out there, and she was certainly one of them.

"Then she arose," verse 41, "bowed her face to the earth, and said, 'Here is your maidservant, a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord.' 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." So, it seems to me a small wonder that he would fall in love with her. Loosed from the fool, she comes humbly to David. By the way, at this point she's extremely wealthy; David's extremely poor. So she really did believe what she said to David, I think, out on the road. "God's going to make of you a king." That would be a hesitancy, I think, for a rich and successful woman, but she saw beyond David's means to David's calling.

Well, we end with this, verse 43, "David also took Ahinoam of Jezreel, and so both of them were his wives. But Saul had given Michal his daughter, David's wife, to Palti the son of Laish, who was from Gallim." So, we end with something that maybe will cause you problems. By the way, polygamy is forbidden in the Bible. It's forbidden, in particular, to the king (in Deuteronomy 17:17), "Don't multiply wives" and a hundred other things. Yet, early on, as God's revelation is progressive, most of the people you find in the Bible - even the most committed to the LORD - fall to the customs and practices of the day. And you'll find that to be less so as the progression goes forward. You will never find polygamy in the Bible leading to a blessing; it is always a curse. And I suspect all of you can say "amen" to that. One wife or one husband is enough. It's hard enough, it's time consuming enough, it's rewarding enough. Can you imagine half a dozen wives or husbands? David's wife Michal, Saul's daughter, had been taken by her father and given to another - which

shows that you had very little say in a lot of these matters. But anyway, if you run into that and you wonder why that's so, progressive revelation tends to lead God's people away from the customs of the culture; early on, they seem to be involved in them in a large way.

Well, we began with the idea that most of us do well handling the major crises in life and yet struggle with the more mundane in life. Paul would write in 1 Corinthians 10:12 that we should be careful when we think we stand because we're about to fall. In other words, never listen to a lesson like this and say, "Well, that could never happen to me." Be careful when you think you stand, lest you fall because it could happen to you, and maybe it has. And this is only one lesson. But the idea is we pass the tests, but we fail the quizzes. We're careful to avoid the daily skirmishes, but the real battles are those daily skirmishes. So, I want you to look at least at David for a minute - that David's reaction here is because he was personally affronted by this. This was personal to David; he felt he'd been threatened or mistreated. Somehow he could deal with javelins thrown at his head, but public humiliation and embarrassment, he couldn't. It was a different deal. He made his decisions in anger; he allowed anger to rule his decisions. He flew off the handle, he lost his cool. Paul, later on, will write to Timothy and Titus two letters about pastors, and he will say to young pastors in training, "Never appoint an elder who is given to outbursts of anger." So I guess David wouldn't qualify. No, but he's learning through it. He's gonna grow through it.

Let's not take matters into our own hands, I guess is the answer. David, fortunately, was teachable. The victory that God gave him, though, in chapter 20 didn't carry over to chapter 21. The victory God gave him in chapter 24 didn't carry over to chapter 25. What you learned tonight you might have to apply tomorrow. Just make sure it carries over. All right?

Next week, we're going to run into David encountering Saul again. We'll see how he does this time around.

Submitted by Maureen Dickson
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