1 Samuel Lesson 18 (2021)

David, Nabal, and Abigail

1Samuel 25:1-44

Key Verse: 25:32,33

Saul determined to kill David, so he pursued him whenever he heard the news of David. In the previous chapter, David had a perfect opportunity to kill Saul and make an end of his fugitive life, but David refused to lay his hand on the Lord’s anointed, so he speared Saul’s life in fear of the Lord. By spearing Saul’s life, he overcame evil with good.

However, in this chapter, David faces a crisis. Nabal insulted David, his integrity into question and named him as a rebel. Out of anger, David had a murderous intention to destroy an entire family of Nabal, paying back evil for evil. It was a big mistake for David to go against Nabal and his entire family.  But through Abigail’s intervention, God prevented David from committing cruel retaliation out of his anger at the moment. May God help us to open our hearts, so we may have a valuable lesson from this passage.

1. David ‘s anger against Nabal (1-13)

*Look at verse 1, Now Samuel died, and all Israel assembled and mourned for him; and they buried him at his home in Ramah. Then David moved down into the Desert of Paran.* Let’s think about Samuel. He served his people whole heartedly throughout his life as a prophet, judge and priest. He delivered the word of God and brought a spiritual revival to the nation, turning the hearts of people to God. As a judge, he traveled all over the country to minister his people faithfully for 40 years. He saved his nation by defeating the Philistines and planted faith in the hearts of his people. Once, after a victory, *Samuel took a stone and put it up between Mizpah and Sen, and said, The LORD has helped us this far, and he named it Ebenezer (1 Samuel 7:12).* This great leader passed away, he was a spiritual mentor for David, but probably David could not attend Samuel’s funeral due to Saul’s murderous attempt to kill him, so he moved down to further south, the Desert of Paran.

*Look at verses 2-3,* ***2****A certain man in Maon, who had property there at Carmel, was very wealthy. He had a thousand goats and three thousand sheep, which he was shearing in Carmel.****3****His name was Nabal and his wife’s name was Abigail. She was an intelligent and beautiful woman, but her husband was surly and mean in his dealings—he was a Calebite.* Nabal had a great wealth, and an intelligent and beautiful wife. He seemed to have everything, but he was an evil and foolish man. Some scholars believe that Nabal's name is not an original name, but a nickname, because the name “Nabal” means “Fool.”

Look at verses 4-8,***4****While David was in the wilderness, he heard that Nabal was shearing sheep.****5****So he sent ten young men and said to them, “Go up to Nabal at Carmel and greet him in my name.****6****Say to him: ‘Long life to you! Good health to you and your household! And good health to all that is yours!*

***7****“‘Now I hear that it is sheep-shearing time. When your shepherds were with us, we did not mistreat them, and the whole time they were at Carmel nothing of theirs was missing.****8****Ask your own servants and they will tell you. Therefore be favorable toward my men, since we come at a festive time. Please give your servants and your son David whatever you can find for them.’”* For herders, shearing sheep is a harvest time, producing a great quantity of wool. They held a great festival and celebrate together, like Thanksgiving. David sent his men to Nabal and greeted him politely wishing for his good health and long life. David asked him for some provision because David and his men watched his property in the wilderness, so that nothing of his was missing. (21) Night and day, they were a wall around them the whole time and protect them from any harm. (16)D avid thought that it was reasonable to ask some provision from the wealthy man at a festive time since he provided great protection for his property. David said, in verse 8b, *Please give your servants and your son David whatever you can find for them.* David humbled himself before Nabal, calling himself as “your servants”, “your son David”. it is a great virtue for the Israelites to show hospitality even to strangers and to the poor.

What was Nabal’s response to David’s humble request? Look at verses 10-11, ***10****Nabal answered David’s servants, “Who is this David? Who is this son of Jesse? Many servants are breaking away from their masters these days.****11****Why should I take my bread and water, and the meat I have slaughtered for my shearers, and give it to men coming from who knows where?”* Instead of recognizing the protection and hardworking that David provided for him, Nabal insulted David and his family and considered him as a rebel against the king Saul. He refused to share anything with David and his men. He considered himself as a self-made men and he was foolish, so he failed to recognize the great help and protection he received from others.

Look at verses 12-13, ***12****David’s men turned around and went back. When they arrived, they reported every word.****13****David said to his men, “Each of you strap on your sword!” So they did, and David strapped his on as well. About four hundred men went up with David, while two hundred stayed with the supplies.* As soon as David heard of Nabal’s word, he exploded with anger. He felt all his hard work for Nabal was useless. Nabal had paid him back evil for good, so David marched with 400 armed men and determined to destroy the entire household of Nabal, saying, *“****22****May God deal with David,[*[*c*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Samuel+25&version=NIV#fen-NIV-7884c)*] be it ever so severely, if by morning I leave alive one male of all who belong to him!” (22)* David, who was calm and prayerful in the previous chapter while dealing with Saul who tried to kill him. But David lost his temper before Nabal who insulted him. In his anger, David was on the verge of becoming another Saul.

I’d like to introduce one story of Alexander the Great. He had a close friend named Cletus, who grew up with him from a very young age.  Even as an adult, Cletus served as a general under his friend Alexander.  On one occasion, Cletus was drunk that he made the mistake of mocking him in front of many military officials.  In his anger, Alexander took a spear next to him and threw it at Cletus. There was no intention to kill him, but unfortunately, the spear stuck in Cletus’ chest.  In his anger, he killed his best friend and a faithful general with his own hands. Alexander regretted greatly of his contingent actions, but it was too late. He said in deep sigh.  *“I have conquered the world, but I have not conquered myself.”* Alexander, who conquered the world, could not control the fleeting anger and left a great regret.

The Bible says that controlling one’s anger is wisdom and true courage. Proverbs 16:32 reads, *He who is slow to anger is better than a mighty man, and he who controls his heart is better than he who takes away his city.* The reason the Bible says is that the words and actions popping out in anger are not from careful thought. Anger is like a bomb. If it is not handled properly, it is exploded and the person who hold the bomb will die first, and then the people around that person. The reason we have to deal with anger properly is not only for others, but for ourselves. Apostle Paul warns it in Ephesians 4:26-27, ***26****“In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry,****27****and do not give the devil a foothold.*

In this stressful society, people become sensitive and it is not easy to control anger. There may be many Nabals who makes us angry. It may be our spouse, children or coworkers and so on. It can be anyone around us or even ourselves. While I was meditating this passage, I remember one event happened 40 years ago while I was in junior high school. On a day of April fool, April first, one of my classmate suddenly hit me with sticks until bleeding. It was hard to bear. I felt like dying due to bursting anger, and the anger remained my heart for a long time like a scar never fading away. I couldn’t get out of such a trauma for more than 20 years until Jesus came into my heart. Isaiah 53:5 reads, *But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed*. This word gave me a great comfort and peace. I still remember the event and how I felt at that time. But I was able to forgive him by the grace of God. Praise the Lord!

David wrote Psalms 14:1-3, probably when he faced a person like Nabal. Let’s read together, ***1****The foolsays in his heart, “There is no God.” They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good.* ***2****The Lord looks down from heaven on all mankind to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God.* ***3****All have turned away, all have become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one.*

1. Abigail’s Wisdom (14-31)

One of the servants told Abigail the whole story including how Nabal hurled insult at David’s messengers, even though they provided protection on them and their flocks. So, what did Abigail do? Look at verses 18-19, ***18****Abigail acted quickly. She took two hundred loaves of bread, two skins of wine, five dressed sheep, five seahs[*[*b*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Samuel+25&version=NIV#fen-NIV-7880b)*] of roasted grain, a hundred cakes of raisins and two hundred cakes of pressed figs, and loaded them on donkeys.****19****Then she told her servants, “Go on ahead; I’ll follow you.” But she did not tell her husband Nabal.* Abigail hurried to prepare abundant food and ran to meet David who was in full of anger. She knew that David’s mem came for food, but left in an empty hand. She knew that David and his men did not have enough food, living in the wilderness, so she brought a large amount of food and presented it to David. She was very wise because she knew what others’ need and gave them very practical help.

Abigail’s petitions are recorded in verses 24-31. Abigail called David as ‘lord’, herself as ‘your servant,’ the words appears 27 times. She humbled herself before David. Furthermore, she admitted the wrongdoing of her husband and took the responsibility on herself. She said in verse 26 ***26****And now, my lord, as surely as the Lord your God lives and as you live, since the Lord has kept you from bloodshed and from avenging yourself with your own hands, may your enemies and all who are intent on harming my lord be like Nabal.* She reminded David that God is the living God, who kept him from bloodshed and his enemies could not withstand against David.

She reminded that God would certainly make a lasting dynasty for David, because he fought the Lord’s battles, and no wrongdoing would be found in David as long as David lives. Abigail said in verses 30-31a,***30****When the Lord has fulfilled for my lord every good thing he promised concerning him and has appointed him ruler over Israel,****31****my lord will not have on his conscience the staggering burden of needless bloodshed or of having avenged himself.* Abigail knew that God would make David a ruler over Israel, but if he killed Nabal and his entire family, it would be a burden for Him and his future kingdom, so she pleaded to withhold from the burden of unnecessary bloodshed. If there was no Abigail's encounter with David, David would have been obsessed with his ugly retaliation and almost wrecked his life, killing many innocent people from his own tribe of Judah.

Let’s read verses 32-34*,* ***32****David said to Abigail, “Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, who has sent you today to meet me.****33****May you be blessed for your good judgment and for keeping me from bloodshed this day and from avenging myself with my own hands.****34****Otherwise, as surely as the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, who has kept me from harming you, if you had not come quickly to meet me, not one male belonging to Nabal would have been left alive by daybreak.”* When David heard of Abigail’s plea, he was compelled to encounter presence of God. He acknowledged God’s intervention in this matter preventing him from needless bloodshed, so he changed his mind from killing Nabal and his entire household. Abigail appeared to be a powerless woman, but she saved many lives and kept David from the murderous intention out of his anger. She was a beautiful in her appearance, but her inner beauty shines greatly through her wise and discerning words. Proverbs 14:1 reads, *The wise woman builds her house, but with her own hands the foolish one tears hers down.* I pray that may God raise many wise women like Abigail in our community and in our nation, so many people may turn to God, and each house and this nation may be established strong in God’s wisdom and truth.

What happened to Nabal? Look at verses 36-38, ***36****When Abigail went to Nabal, he was in the house holding a banquet like that of a king. He was in high spirits and very drunk. So she told him nothing at all until daybreak.****37****Then in the morning, when Nabal was sober, his wife told him all these things, and his heart failed him and he became like a stone.****38****About ten days later, the Lord struck Nabal and he died.* Nabal was foolish that he didn’t aware the impending calamity on him and his family. He enjoyed a banquet like that of a king. However, when he heard of what had happened in the previous night, his heart failed and died after ten days. It was God’s judgment on the wicked man. Nabal couldn’t escape from his corrupted past and could not stand on God’s judgment.

When David heard of Nabal's death, David glorified God for striking the wicked in his place and he proposed Abigail as his wife, a wise and beautiful woman and accepted her as his wife.

In conclusion, there are many things happens in our lives in this world. If we are treated unfairly, in nature, we want to take matters in our own hands and try to make it even. If anyone hurts our pride, then it is easy for us to be angry and ends up with careless words and actions against others. But it is nothing more than repaying evil for evil. We should not act on with the mind of revenge or anything in anger. We need to have wise and discerning mind before any action we take. When we look at David, he was sensitive to acknowledge God’s intervention in his life, so he was able to withhold himself from executing personal revenge against God’s will. Furthermore, one of his greatness was that he was quick to change his mind when he realized his sin against God. He was about murdering many innocent people in his anger, but he quickly turned away from it and made it right with God. I pray that may God help us not to act carelessly in anger, so we may experience real victory in our personal life through Jesus Christ.