

The Life of David

David and Abigail—Part 2

1 Samuel 25:32-44

Rev. Freddy Fritz

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Scripture

Last time we learned how David wanted to kill Nabal because Nabal had rudely rebuffed David's request for food. The Lord providentially intervened by sending Nabal's "discerning and beautiful" wife Abigail to prevent David from carrying out his murderous intent. In today's lesson, we continue to learn about David and Abigail.

Let's read about David and Abigail in 1 Samuel 25:32-44:

³² And David said to Abigail, "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me! ³³ Blessed be your discretion, and blessed be you, who have kept me this day from bloodguilt and from working salvation with my own hand! ³⁴ For as surely as the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, who has restrained me from hurting you, unless you had hurried and come to meet me, truly by morning there had not been left to Nabal so much as one male." ³⁵ Then David received from her hand what she had brought him. And he said to her, "Go up in peace to your house. See, I have obeyed your voice, and I have granted your petition."

³⁶ And Abigail came to Nabal, and behold, he was holding a feast in his house, like the feast of a king. And Nabal's heart was merry within him, for he was very drunk. So she told him nothing at all until the morning light. ³⁷ In the morning, when the wine had gone out of Nabal, his wife told him these things, and his heart died within him, and he became as a stone. ³⁸ And about ten days later the Lord struck Nabal, and he died.

³⁹ When David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, "Blessed be the Lord who has avenged the insult I received at the hand of Nabal, and has kept back his servant from wrongdoing. The Lord has returned the evil of Nabal on his own head." Then David sent and spoke to Abigail, to take

her as his wife. ⁴⁰ When the servants of David came to Abigail at Carmel, they said to her, “David has sent us to you to take you to him as his wife.” ⁴¹ And she rose and bowed with her face to the ground and said, “Behold, your handmaid is a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord.” ⁴² And Abigail hurried and rose and mounted a donkey, and her five young women attended her. She followed the messengers of David and became his wife.

⁴³ David also took Ahinoam of Jezreel, and both of them became his wives. ⁴⁴ Saul had given Michal his daughter, David’s wife, to Palti the son of Laish, who was of Galim. (1 Samuel 25:32-44)

Introduction

It took 125 years, but finally the infamous feud between the Hatfields and McCoys was settled. Sixty descendants of the original clans gathered on Saturday, June 14, 2003, in Pikeville, Kentucky, to sign a document declaring an official end to more than a century of hatred and bloodshed.

Most people think that the feud between the McCoys of Kentucky and Hatfields of West Virginia began in 1878 when Randolph McCoy accused one of the Hatfields of stealing a hog. The Hatfields won the “hog war” when a McCoy cousin sided with the Hatfield clan.

Feelings festered and other incidents occurred that finally resulted in the shooting death of Ellison Hatfield in 1882. Retaliation beget retaliation until the feud claimed 11 more family members over the next ten years. Subsequent conflicts between the two clans have involved court battles over timber rights and cemetery plots.

The treaty calling for peace read: “We do hereby and formally declare an official end to all hostilities, implied, inferred, and real, between the families, now and forevermore. We ask by God’s grace and love that we be forever remembered as those that bound

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together the hearts of two families to form a family of freedom in America.”

Although the treaty was largely symbolic, both the governor of Kentucky and the governor of West Virginia were present for the nationally televised ceremony.¹

When Nabal rudely rebuffed David’s request for food, David became incensed. He wanted to kill Nabal and every male in Nabal’s household. He ordered four hundred of his men to follow him as he went to go and kill Nabal. But the Lord providentially intervened through Nabal’s wife Abigail. She was able to speak to David in such a way that he listened to her and did not carry out his murderous intention, which would have been disastrous for him. If he had killed Nabal, David would have been no different than Saul.

There are times when you and I may feel rebuffed by someone. Someone may snub us, or reject us, or rebuff us, or disagree with us, or even hurt us. Do you ever feel like you want to retaliate? Do you feel like you want to get back at that person? You may not think it out loud, but you really want to do something about what has been done to you. You want to take justice, as it were, into your own hands. Well, if you have ever been in such a place—and you probably have—then today’s lesson is for you and for me.

Lesson

First Samuel 25:32-44 shows us that vengeance belongs to the Lord.

Let’s use the following outline:

1. David’s Response (25:32-35)
2. Nabal’s Death (25:36-38)
3. David’s Vindication (25:39a)
4. David’s Wives (39b-44)

¹ See <https://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/2003/july/14487.html>.

I. David's Response (25:32-35)

First, let's look at David's response.

One of the young men, presumably one of Nabal's servants, told Abigail about Nabal's rude rebuff to David's servants. He also told her that harm would come to Nabal and his household because of Nabal's rejection of David's request for food.

Abigail immediately went into action and sent food ahead of her to intercept David and his men. She followed and, just before she met David, overheard him say that by morning he was going to kill every male in Nabal's household (25:21-22). When Abigail met David she humbled herself before him and pleaded with him not to carry out his intention of killing Nabal and his household. It was an amazing speech of tact and wisdom and discernment.

In response, **David said to Abigail, "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me! Blessed be your discretion, and blessed be you, who have kept me this day from bloodguilt and from working salvation with my own hand! For as surely as the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, who has restrained me from hurting you, unless you had hurried and come to meet me, truly by morning there had not been left to Nabal so much as one male"** (25:32-34).

David's response is astonishing. One moment he was filled with murderous rage; the next moment he was completely calm. He was thankful to the Lord for Abigail's timely intervention. He affirmed that the Lord had used Abigail to prevent him from doing something he would later regret.

Then David received from her hand what she had brought him (25:35a). The provisions she had brought were not enough to feed all of David's followers, but he received it as a token of her goodwill toward him and his men. **And he said to her, "Go up in peace to your house. See, I have obeyed your voice,**

and I have granted your petition” (25:35b). David responded to Abigail’s petition for peace by backing off from his murderous intention. The Lord had used Abigail to bring David to his senses.

Sometimes, the Lord may use you to intervene in a difficult situation. Someone has expressed an intention to take a particular action, and you see that it may cause enormous damage. You may be the one that the Lord is calling to intervene in order to avert disaster. Your intervention may or may not avert disaster, as the other person is still responsible for his or her actions. But, at least, you will have done your part.

II. Nabal’s Death (25:36-38)

Second, let’s examine Nabal’s death.

David and his men apparently turned around and went back to their hideout. Meanwhile, **Abigail** went back to her home and **came to Nabal, and behold, he was holding a feast in his house, like the feast of a king** (25:36a). I think it is no accident that the author of the Book of First Samuel notes that Nabal was holding a feast, **“like the feast of a king.”** Nabal is not very different than Saul in his relationship to David. Perhaps Nabal was celebrating and laughing at how he rebuffed David’s messengers. **And Nabal’s heart was merry within him, for he was very drunk** (25:36b).

Noticing that Nabal was very drunk, Abigail **told him nothing at all until the morning light** (25:36c). When Nabal was sober, Abigail told him about how she had intercepted David and prevented David from killing Nabal and all the male members of his household. Apparently, Nabal was utterly shocked by this news, **and his heart died within him, and he became as a stone** (25:37). Commentators differ about whether Nabal had a heart attack or a stroke. Regardless, **about ten days later the Lord struck Nabal, and he died** (25:38). Richard Phillips notes:

Notice that Nabal did not simply die from “natural causes” as a result of his earlier convulsion. It was the Lord who struck Nabal. God had taken vengeance for Nabal’s sin against God’s anointed king, David, just as he is sure to do in the final judgment against all who despise Jesus Christ, of which David’s kingdom was a type. Nabal’s sin had been against God personally, and his judgment had been administered personally by God against him. Nabal’s demise was not the natural outworking of impersonal rules of divine providence: God himself had struck Nabal down as retribution for his sin. Nabal’s wickedness had been repaid in God’s timing, a timing that was and is far swifter than sinners like Nabal might foolishly hope.²

Nabal’s death is a clear example of vengeance belonging to the Lord. It was the Lord who struck Nabal, **“and he died.”** Now, the Lord does not always apply vengeance at once. There are many unbelievers who sin with great abandon and scoff at the idea that vengeance belongs to the Lord. They do not see any retributive justice from the Lord while they are alive, and so they continue in their sin.

We need to remind ourselves that the Lord does not always apply retributive justice in this world. Examples such as Nabal are given to us to cause us to turn—now, today—from our sin to the Lord in repentance and faith. We need to remind ourselves that the Lord will meet out retributive justice, always after we die but sometimes before we die.

If you are here today and you are not yet a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, if you have never asked the Lord to forgive you of your sin, know that the Lord commands you to do so today—before it is too late, as it was for Nabal.

² Richard D. Phillips, *1 Samuel*, ed. Philip Graham Ryken and Richard D. Phillips, Duguid Iain M., 1st ed., Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2012), 440–441.

III. David's Vindication (25:39a)

Third, let's notice David's vindication.

When David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, "Blessed be the Lord who has avenged the insult I received at the hand of Nabal, and has kept back his servant from wrongdoing. The Lord has returned the evil of Nabal on his own head" (25:39a). John Woodhouse writes:

There is no suggestion here that David's attitude was wrong. True, he needed the correction of Abigail's words earlier, but now we hear the words of David after he had learned his lesson.

This is one of those moments where we must be reminded that Bible narratives are not simply moral tales. We must remember here that David was God's king. Nabal's foolish behavior was more than a personal insult to the man David. He was scorning God's king.³

Earlier, after David had spared Saul's life, he said to Saul, "May the Lord therefore be judge and give sentence between me and you, and see to it and plead my cause and deliver me from your hand" (24:15). Now, in David's interaction with Nabal, the Lord directly intervened and judged the matter between him and Nabal. David had been vindicated by the Lord whom he had to trust to be his vindicator.

When you are wronged, rebuffed, scorned, slighted, rejected, or even hurt, let the Lord therefore be judge and give sentence between you and the one who has wronged you. Always remember that vengeance belongs to the Lord. He will plead your cause and deliver you from the hand of the one who is against you.

³ John Woodhouse, *1 Samuel: Looking for a Leader*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008), 483.

IV. David's Wives (25:39b-44)

And fourth, let's look at David's wives.

Nabal was now dead, and Abigail was now a widow. So David sent his servants to Abigail **to take her as his wife. When the servants of David came to Abigail at Carmel, they said to her, "David has sent us to you to take you to him as his wife"** (25:39b-40). The Scripture does not tell us how Abigail became Nabal's wife. Perhaps she became his wife following the custom of the day of parents arranging the marriages of their children. Over the course of her marriage to Nabal, however, he was shown to be foolish, however, that is, to have no concern for the Lord and the things of the Lord. On the other hand, Abigail grew in discretion and discernment, and had a concern for the Lord and the things of the Lord, for she knew that the Lord had appointed David as the future king over Israel.

Young people, be very careful to whom you give your heart. We no longer have parents arranging marriages. You make your own choice today, and that is generally a good thing. Choose a future spouse who loves the Lord and the things of the Lord. And don't be fooled by what someone may say; look at that person's actions to see whether word and deed match.

Abigail then **rose and bowed with her face to the ground and said, "Behold, your handmaid is a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord."** And Abigail hurried and rose and mounted a donkey, and her five young women attended her. She followed the messengers of David and became his wife (25:41-42).

Then, **David also took Ahinoam of Jezreel, and both of them became his wives** (25:43). The note in *The ESV Study Bible* says about **Ahinoam**, "Because she is always mentioned first, David probably married her before he married Abigail."⁴ Phillips

⁴ Crossway Bibles, *The ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 533.

notes that “however distressing it may have been for Abigail to find that she was one of two wives that David would take, this was not an unaccustomed practice for a man of David’s public stature in that time. Still, we should observe that David’s polygamy failed to uphold God’s design for marriage and would in the end lead to great harm to both David and his household.”⁵

You may recall that prior to his marriages to Abigail and Ahinoam, David was married to Michal, the daughter of Saul. She was given to David as his wife after he defeated Goliath. Perhaps out of spite, and certainly for some unstated reason, **Saul had given Michal his daughter, David’s wife, to Palti the son of Laish, who was of Gallim (25:44)**. This sealed the separation between Saul and David. But the division between Saul and David was far from over, as we shall learn next time.

Conclusion

Therefore, having analyzed the incident of David and Abigail as set forth in 1 Samuel 25:32-44, let us forgive others now knowing that it is for the Lord to judge the unrepentant.

David’s action in 1 Samuel 25 teaches us that vengeance belongs to the Lord. Initially, David wanted to take vengeance out on Nabal himself. But the Lord used Abigail to intervene providentially to protect David from making a huge mistake. And through the intervention of Abigail, David in fact forgave Nabal.

My conclusion is similar to that of John Woodhouse:

This remarkable aspect of David’s conduct is strikingly similar to Jesus who did not come, in his first coming, “to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him” (John 3:17; cf. 12:47). The time will come for judgment (John 5:22). In the meantime Jesus Christ is in the business of forgiveness (Luke 24:47). Those who belong to him must be in

⁵ Richard D. Phillips, *1 Samuel*, ed., 444.

the same business (see Romans 12:14–21).⁶

Yes, let us leave the Lord to judge the unrepentant. Let us be in the business of forgiveness.

A notable example of personal forgiveness was given to us just this past Wednesday. It was all over the news. You may recall that in September 2018 Dallas Police Officer Amber Guyger killed a man named Botham Jean in his own apartment. After her shift, she entered his apartment mistaking it for her own apartment and, thinking that he was intruder, shot and killed him. On Wednesday, Police Officer Amber Guyger got a 10-year prison sentence for mistakenly killing Botham Jean. Botham’s eighteen-year-old younger brother, Brandt Jean said he forgave Guyger for shooting his brother. “I want the best for you because I know that’s exactly what Botham would want you to do, and the best would be to give your life to Christ,” he told her before asking Judge Tammy Kemp for permission to hug Guyger. He hugged her, and that photo has gone viral. Judge Kemp also hugged Guyger, handed her personal Bible to her, and told her to live John 3:16, which says, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

Dozens of people gathered Wednesday night in downtown Dallas to protest the sentence as too lenient. But at a Dallas church where Botham Jean used to lead singing, family and friends applauded and shouted “amen” when they watched a video of his brother embracing Guyger in court.⁷

Friends, let us forgive others now knowing that the Lord will judge the unrepentant.

And, if you are not yet a believer, turn to the Lord today and believe on his Son so that you may not perish but have eternal life. Amen.

⁶ John Woodhouse, *1 Samuel: Looking for a Leader*, 484.

⁷ See https://world.wng.org/content/court_family_show_mercy_to_amber_guyger.

Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church
is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ
and membership in his church family,
develop them to Christlike maturity,
equip them for their ministry in the church
and life mission in the world,
in order to magnify God's name.*

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Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church (PCA)

Answers for Life!

Address: 19911 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., Tampa, FL 33647

Telephone: (813) 973-2484

Fax: (813) 973-4673

Email: Office@TampaBayPresbyterian.org

Web site: www.TampaBayPresbyterian.org