

## 1 Samuel 25, Vengeance Belongs to God

In 1 Samuel 24, David's patience and mercy were put to the test when King Saul had falsely accused David of treason and Saul tried to kill David in the wilderness of Engedi. Saul had organized about 3,000 special forces soldiers to track down and kill David. Saul was a paranoid, greedy, selfish man who had proven himself disobedient and unfaithful to the one true God of Israel. God had ordered the High Priest Samuel to ordain a new king to take Saul's place. The people had asked for a king "like all the pagan nations had", and God had given them Saul—a man after the people's depraved heart. Saul had proven himself to be wicked over and over, so God told Samuel to ordain "a man after God's own heart" as the new king. At the battle of Elah Valley, David had proven himself to be a man of faith, "a man after God's own heart". God allowed Saul to stay on the throne another 15-20 years so the people would get a full experience of Saul's evil and David's righteousness. Since 1 Samuel 16, there has been a gradual recognition of David's future as king. Saul's son Jonathan saw it first. The Philistines expected it in chapter 21. The people of Israel sang songs of David's greatness, and treated him as worthy to be king. Even Saul admitted it in 1 Samuel 24:20, saying "I know that you shall be king". While searching for David in order to kill him, Saul had gone into a cave to relieve himself. By the providence of God, David was hiding in the dark in that very cave. David's men urged him to kill Saul, but David had mercy on him, and David proved his innocence by secretly cutting off a piece of Saul's cloak. After Saul had walked a short distance away, David came out of the cave and yelled down to Saul, "I will not stretch out my hand against the king for he is the Lord's anointed...know and perceive there is no evil or rebellion in me, and I have not sinned against you". By showing Saul the part of his torn off cloak it was clear David had the opportunity to kill Saul and take the crown by force, but he had shown mercy and forgiveness. David would let the Lord deal with Saul as the Scriptures promise He will do, "Vengeance is mine sayeth the Lord" (Romans 12:19). David showed incredible patience, mercy, and forgiveness to King Saul, but did David still have a lot to learn from God before he would be king? David would spend the next 10-12 years being tested by God. This was time designed by God to discover God's faithful ways of forbearance, mercy, faith, and character. 1 Samuel is about the leadership crisis in Israel. God provided leadership in Samuel and then David, but David needed to be educated.

### Patience with Fools

There was a rich greedy evil man at Carmel who was very much like King Saul. The King had

abused, accused, and mistreated David, but David had been faithful, kind, and subservient—never losing his temper. Twice David had a chance to kill Saul, but spared him, but now in 1 Samuel 25 a rich abusive guy named Nabal will mistreat David, and David is going to lose it completely against him. It's one thing to be patient with the king, but David has had enough abuse and disrespect. David has years of pent up frustration and anger, so now he will unleash it on a fool named Nabal. Yet by the providence of God, David will learn forbearance and forgiveness even for a fool because God was preparing His man to be king. David was now hiding from Saul in the wilderness of Maon near Carmel. David had 600 loyal fighting men with him. In those days, the Philistines were always raiding from the west and the Ammonites or Amalekites from the south and east. David was protecting the people in that area from these raiders. One of the biggest owners of livestock in that area was Nabal, and he had been the beneficiary of David's protection. All businesses have to make allowances for losses, shrinkage, or theft, but Nabal had been enriched by the sudden security of David's army. At sheep shearing time, it would be a big payday and Nabal would be flush. David sent some of his men to politely ask for provisions for his men, since David was greatly responsible for Nabal's success. But like all greedy misers like Mr. Potter, Nabal not only declined, he insulted David and his men. It's not surprising that the name Nabal in Hebrew means "fool". Commentators debate whether the author gave him that name or maybe it was a nickname his wife and neighbors gave him. Either way it was an appropriate name because he might as well have poked the python or pulled off the mask of the Lone Ranger or awakened a sleeping giant. Yet guys like Mr. Potter and Nabal never give, they only take! Notice Nabal's response in 1 Samuel 25:11 with all the I, me, my's that Nabal answered with, "my bread, my meat, my water, my shearers". He obviously felt self sufficient and had no use for God or a man of God like David. Reminds me of Psalm 14:1, "The fool says in his heart there is no God" and thus no accountability. They didn't name him "fool" for nothing! His insulting response to David's request was "the straw that broke the camel's back". Years of being falsely accused and mistreated exploded in David, and he yelled at his warriors to gather their weapons and mount up. David said that by morning he would kill Nabal and every man in his family as well as everyone that worked for him—one total slaughter coming up! This was like killing a roach with a shotgun. Let's say someone dinged your car with their door in the parking lot, so you pulled out a bazooka and blasted them and their car into a flaming junk heap! Nabal's folly was to be massacred for a few loaves of bread, and he foolishly made a good friend an enemy. Most importantly to us—Will David let his anger control him? Will he forfeit his right to be king by one murderous act? Will God

providentially intervene to bring David to his senses, and continue to prepare David to be a righteous king?

### A Righteous Woman Saves the Day, 1 Samuel 25:18-31

Nabal's servants know that he has sown the wind and now they will all reap the whirlwind. They know Nabal is too foolish and unreasonable to listen to common sense, so they go to his wife Abigail. Incredible as it sounds, this nasty curmudgeon had a young beautiful intelligent and wise wife named Abigail. We can speculate that in those days in the Middle East marriages were arranged, and Abigail's parents arranged the wedding. Her name "ABBA Gail" means "Daddy is joyous". I guess her dad got a big dowry for her, but regardless she was a godly wise woman who would courageously put herself right in the path of an angry army. Abigail went out and approached David humbly bowing down to him as if he was already the king in her eyes. Six times she called herself "your maidservant", and eight times she called David "my Lord". She wisely secretly carried out a mission to intercede between David and the fool that was her husband. She had already sent ahead all the provisions David had asked for, after that she met him in a ravine. Initially, David's countenance was fierce, and his words were angry. Abigail's speech had wisdom, insight, and was very persuasive. It didn't hurt that she was smoking hot beautiful. Abigail knew that David was a faithful believer in God and that he would be the next king. She appealed to him on the basis that slaughtering Nabal and his household was unworthy of God's appointed king. She said David was a holy man who should return good for evil just as he had done for Saul. A man of God is responsible to do the right thing. Commentator Eugene Peterson stated it well, "Your task David is not to exact vengeance, righteous wrath is God's business, and you are not God. You are out here in the wilderness to find out what God is doing and who you are before God. The wilderness is where you discover the strength of God and God's faithful ways of working in and through your life. Nabal is a fool, but don't you also become a fool. One fool is enough in this story." Someone said "Don't get down in the mud and wrestle a pig— you will both get filthy dirty, but the pig likes it." Abigail also told David that if there was any punishment due, please do it to her. She was willing to sacrifice herself to save many. This is true intercession.

Abigail also made a prophecy that would come true. God would protect David from evil men, and that he would become king. Based on this, she told David, don't have a guilty conscience of bloodlust and murder. In v.32-35, Abigail's speech was effective, and a very humble wise

admonishment moved David from rage to calm thankfulness to God for the intercession.

Epilogue, the Providence of God Blesses David Again, v.36-44

When Abigail went home, Nabal was drunk—the fool was partying while Abigail was interceding, so she didn't tell him, but the next morning when she told him that 400 warriors had been coming to kill him, he had a stroke and ten days later died. God had used Nabal's evil and David's anger as an opportunity to bless David and Abigail. After Nabal died, David proposed to Abigail and they were happily married. Later after Saul died and the people had to decide upon the next king, that area of Carmel where this story happened, was instrumental in choosing David as king. Once again God providentially brought about good out of a very bad situation. Through ordinary circumstances, God dealt judgment on Nabal, and blessing on David and Abigail.

Proverbs 29:11, "A wise man keeps himself under control"

James 1:19-20, "Be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger, for man's anger does not produce the righteous life that God desires."

Ephesians 4:26-27, "Be angry but do not sin, do not let the sun go down on your anger"

Ephesians 4:31, "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and slander be put away".

CHARLIE TAYLOR