

1st Samuel 25:1-44
The Lord Restrains David From Sin

Introduction

1. We've been learning about David and so far we've seen his amazing commitment to honoring God by doing right
2. If we didn't already know the famous story of David's sin with Bathsheba that comes up later in 2nd Samuel, we might begin to think that David never sinned
3. Today, however, we see that David was just like us and not immune to sin
4. But, the events of today's text really aren't about David, as much as they are God's work in David's life to restrain him from sin
5. And, there's a direct correlation to us because God does the same for us

A. Nabal commits an offense against David (1-11)

1. We are instructed to a couple who couldn't be more different (1-3)
 - a. Nabal was a rich man, but also foolish and wicked
 - 1) He was "**very rich**" with "**three thousand sheep and a thousand goats**" (1)
 - 2) His name means "foolish" or "senseless"—it's likely that the author was trying to drive this point home because he repeats Nabal's name 16 times in this passage
 - 3) He was "**harsh and evil in his dealings**"—we might think of Mr. Potter in *It's a Wonderful Life*
 - 4) Later in the text, one of his servants refers to him as "**a worthless man that no one can speak to him**" (17b)
 - b. His wife, Abigail, was the total opposite:
 - 1) She was "**intelligent and beautiful in appearance**" (3a):
 - a) More literally, "good of understanding"
 - b) Hebrew word implies the ability to understand reason
 - c) TWOT: "There is the process of thinking through a complex arrangement of thoughts resulting in a wise dealing and use of good practical common sense"
 - d) So, she was directly the opposite of her foolish husband
 - 2) As a result, she was apparently respected among Nabal's servants (as is evidenced by the servant coming to her for help in vs. 14-17)
2. David sends me to Nabal in a time of need (4-8):
 - a. He and his men are in the wilderness on the run from Saul, with apparently no food or means of support
 - b. Nabal's shepherds are in the region and David and his men provided them with protection:
 - 1) "**...your shepherds were with us...**" (7a)
 - 2) "**...and we have not insulted them**" (7b)—likely a reference to not disgracing them
 - 3) "**...nor have they missed anything all the days they were in Carmel**" (7c)—a reference to the fact that the none of Nabal's livestock had been stolen to thieves as a result of the protect David and his men provided

- 4) Look at the glowing report that one of Nabal's own servants provides (15-16): **"Yet the men were very good to us, and we were not insulted, nor did we miss anything as long as we went about with them, while we were in the fields. 16 "They were a wall to us both by night and by day, all the time we were with them tending the sheep."**
- c. So, David asks Nabal to provide a little something for his men to help provide for their needs (8): **"Therefore let my young men find favor in your eyes, for we have come on a festive day. Please give whatever you find at hand to your servants and to your son David."**
3. Nabal responds with disrespect and contempt (9-11):
 - a. Nabal's response is quite shocking, especially when we consider what David and his men had done for him and his servants, and considering normal ANE hospitality (a bit on this later)
 - b. He begins his response with disrespect and an insult (9): **"Who is David? And who is the son of Jesse?"**
 - 1) He knew full-well who David was as demonstrated by his own words
 - 2) This was an insult, **"Who is this David that I should care about him?"**
 - c. He continues to insult David by referring to him as nothing but a runaway slave (10b): **"There are many servants today who are each breaking away from his master."**
 - d. Finally, he simply refused to repay David and his men for their kindness and service (11—notice the emphasis on himself): **"Shall I then take my bread and my water and my meat that I have slaughtered for my shearers, and give it to men whose origin I do not know?"**

B. David responds to Nabal's mistreatment with a plan to avenge himself (12-13)

1. David's intent was to utterly wipeout Nabal's household (13): **"David said to his men, "Each of you gird on his sword." So each man girded on his sword. And David also girded on his sword, and about four hundred men went up behind David while two hundred stayed with the baggage."**
 - a. The word sword is mentioned three times
 - b. David took 400 men with him—a bit overkill for one man's household even if he were rich
 - c. See also vs. 21-22: **"Surely in vain I have guarded all that this man has in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that belonged to him; and he has returned me evil for good. 22 "May God do so to the enemies of David, and more also, if by morning I leave as much as one male of any who belong to him"**
2. David's anger and frustration might be justified to some degree:
 - a. Hospitality was an important social custom in the ANE and Israel, especially when encountering travelers:
 - 1) Many countries outside of Israel had laws allowing travelers to eat grain as they walked through private fields
 - 2) It was common to bow to one another and offer a kind and respectful greeting as a sign of respect (as David's men did when they met Laban)
 - 3) Water was also given for refreshment and the washing of feet
 - 4) In some areas, it was considered an insult if you didn't beg a traveler or guest to stay when they got up to depart
 - 5) We see many of these things reflected in Abraham in Genesis 18:1-16

- b. So, Nabal not only disrespected David by his words, but by refusing to offer him hospitality that was both common culturally and demonstrated Biblically by Abraham
3. While David's anger and frustration might have been justified, his actions certainly weren't:
- a. He actions were driven by a desire for revenge
 - b. They would have resulted in the shedding of innocent blood (as seen below)

C. The Lord restrains David from sin (14-35)
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1. Abigail displays her wisdom (18-31):
 - a. Nabal's servant seeks Abigail's help (14-17):
 - 1) Nabal was **"such a worthless man that no one can speak to him"** that the servant sought help from Abigail (17b)
 - 2) He pleaded with her to do what she could (17a): **"know and consider what you should do, for evil is plotted against our master and against all his household"**
 - b. So, she sets out to prevent a tragedy and it's here that we seek how truly wise and understanding she was (23-31):
 - 1) She approaches David with a tremendous amount of respect and humility (23):
 - a) As soon as she sees David she dismounts from her donkey, and does it quickly
 - b) She falls on her face before David and bows
 - c) She also refers to herself as David's maidservant
 - 2) She takes the blame for Nabal's foolish actions:
 - a) **"On me alone, my lord, be the blame. And please let your maidservant speak to you, and listen to the words of your maidservant."** (24)
 - b) **"but I your maidservant did not see the young men of my lord whom you sent"** (25)
 - c) **"Please forgive the transgression of your maidservant;"** (28)
 - 3) She extended the proper hospitality to David and his men, something Nabal should have done (27):
 - a) **"Now let this gift which your maidservant has brought to my lord be given to the young men who accompany my lord."**
 - b) According to v. 18 this included two hundred loaves of bread, two jugs of wine, five sheep that she had already prepared, five measures of roasted grain, two hundred clusters of raisins and two hundred cakes of figs
 - 4) She suggests that it is the LORD Himself that has sent her to David to keep him from sinning: (26): **"Now therefore, my lord, as the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, since the LORD has restrained you from shedding blood, and from avenging yourself by your own hand, now then let your enemies and those who seek evil against my lord, be as Nabal."**

Dave Johnson's wife, Tamera, submitting to him when they disagreed, but reminding him that he was accountable to God
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- 5) She reminded David that the LORD is the one who is responsible for fighting his battles (28-29): **"for the LORD will certainly make for my lord an enduring house, because my lord is fighting the battles of the LORD, and evil will not be found in you all your days. 29 "Should anyone rise up to pursue you and to seek your life, then the life of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of the living with the LORD your God; but the lives of your enemies He will sling out as from the hollow of a sling."**
 - a) Did you catch what she did there?
 - b) Her use of the imagery of God using a sling to slay David's enemies is brilliant considering he used a sling to kill Goliath
 - c) What a great reminder to David of this truth that God would deliver him from his enemies, not his own vengeance

- 6) Finally, she suggests to David that if he focuses on fighting the LORD'S battles and not his own three things will result:
 - a) The LORD will establish David's dynasty (28b): **"for the LORD will certainly make for my lord an enduring house..."**
 - b) He would be kept from evil (28c): **"...and evil will not be found in you all your days."**
 - c) He would not regret his actions once he became king (30-31): **"And when the LORD does for my lord according to all the good that He has spoken concerning you, and appoints you ruler over Israel, 31 this will not cause grief or a troubled heart to my lord, both by having shed blood without cause and by my lord having avenged himself. "**

2. Fortunately, Abigail's words have an impact on David and he turns back from his sin (32-35):
 - a. He not only recognized God's hand in restraining him from sin, but rejoiced over it and blessed God for it (32): **"Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me..."**
 - b. He not only recognized the wisdom and discernment of Abigail, but blessed her for it (33): **"and blessed be your discernment, and blessed be you, who have kept me this day from bloodshed and from avenging myself by my own hand."**
 - c. He recognized that without her intervention, he would have committed a grave sin (34): **"Nevertheless, as the LORD God of Israel lives, who has restrained me from harming you, unless you had come quickly to meet me, surely there would not have been left to Nabal until the morning light as much as one male."**
 - d. Finally, he appreciated what he had done and sent her away in peace (35): **"So David received from her hand what she had brought him and said to her, 'Go up to your house in peace. See, I have listened to you and granted your request.'"**

D. The LORD avenges David (36-38)

1. In a bit of prophetic fulfillment to Abigail's words, the LORD judges Nabal for his foolish actions
2. When Abigail informs Nabal how she thwarted David's plan to kill him, Nabal suffers what appears to be a stroke at the LORD'S hand and then dies 10 days later

Conclusion

There are primarily three things that struck me about this text today

1. The first is our natural desire to avenge ourselves, like David, and the fact that it generally leads us into sin:
 - a. We're all sinners, and therefore bound to offend one another
 - b. When that happens, we like to defend or avenge ourselves
 - c. But, Jesus said we are to turn the other cheek
 - d. Paul wrote, **"Never take you own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay,' says the LORD."** (Romans 12:19)
 - e. When we ignore these words, it leads to meeting someone else's sin against us, with our own sin

2. The second is the LORD's work in our lives to help us avoid sin:
 - a. In John 15:26, immediately after a discussion on what it means to love God by obeying Jesus' commands, Jesus promised us a Helper, the Holy Spirit, to help us do this
 - b. According to Jesus, one thing the Holy Spirit does is teach us all things and remind us of all the things Jesus taught (26)
 - c. Later in 16:8-11 Jesus said the Holy Spirit would "convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment"
 - d. Considering that the Holy Spirit now lives inside of us, is there any question that He might be at work in our hearts as a restraining force to lead us away from sin?

3. The third is that often the Holy Spirit accomplishes His work in this regard by using others to confront us, just like the LORD used Abigail to confront David:
 - a. In fact, Galatians 6 calls us to this very thing
 - b. The problem is that often we don't appreciate it when someone confronts us (especially when it's not done in the right spirit)
 - c. David's example should serve as a model:
 - 1) He recognized Abigail was God's instrument to restrain him from sin
 - 2) He was thankful, and rejoiced and blessed not only God for intervening, but Abigail as well
 - 3) He recognized that without Abigail's actions, he would have sinned
 - 4) Finally, he appreciated what Abigail had done and sent her away in peace