

Lesson 17: The Enemy in My Hand, pt 2 (First Samuel 25)

Recap: Picture comparisons

As we have gone through the chapters, we have been noting the deliberate parallels that the author has been making between episodes in David's life and Saul's life.

Chapter 14	Chapter 22-23 5 6
Chapter 15 (15:27-28) Saul tears a piece of cloth from Samuel's robe (15:30) Saul repents before Samuel <i>"Then he said, 'I have sinned; yet honor me now, please, before the elders of my people and before Israel, and return with me, that I may worship the LORD your God.'"</i> (15:31) <i>"So Samuel turned back after Saul . . ."</i> (15:34) <i>"Then Samuel went to Ramah, and Saul went up to his house at Gibeah of Saul."</i>	Chapter 24-25:1 10 (24:4) David tears a piece of cloth from Saul's robe (24:17-21) Saul repents before David <i>"Therefore swear now to me by the LORD that you will not cut off my descendants after me, and that you will not destroy my name from my father's house."</i> (24:22) <i>"So David swore to Saul . . ."</i> (24:22) <i>". . . And Saul went home, but David and his men went up to the stronghold."</i>

First Samuel 24 ends at verse 22, but the picture extends to First Samuel 25:1 which provides a cap for the series of comparisons:

(15:35) ***"And Samuel went no more to see Saul until the day of his death. Nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul . . ."***

(25:1) *"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."*

The Death of Samuel, First Samuel 25:1

1. What is the purpose of the narrator's comment here in verse 1?
2. What is the theme?
3. Why does the text say David goes to the Wilderness of Paran? Where is the Wilderness of Paran?

4. How does glorification relate to theme of vengeance?

David's Wilderness of Paran Challenge:

- Do you lift yourself up and avenge yourself against your antagonist, or do you let God avenge and glorify you?
- Are you seeking glory to build up yourself and your kingdom, or God and God's kingdom?
- And who gets the praise when all is said and done?

Chapter 25 Structure Overview

First Samuel 25 opens with a pivotal narrator's comment, which is appropriate since the entire chapter itself is a pivotal chapter in regards to its place within the greater structure of chapters. The themes of chapters 21-29 mirror themselves across this chapter:

First Samuel **21**: David rejected by the Philistines

First Samuel **22**: Saul kills the priesthood

First Samuel **23**: David gets out of a trap through God's wisdom

First Samuel **24**: Saul at David's mercy (David cuts his robe)

First Samuel **25**: David and Nabal

First Samuel **26**: Saul at David's mercy (David takes his spear & water jug)

First Samuel **27**: David gets into a trap by his own wisdom

First Samuel **28**: Saul seeks a medium

First Samuel **29**: David rejected by the Philistines

All of the external structure bring the focus to bear on Chapter 25. The internal structure brings our focus to bear on Abigail's dialogue. That is the central focus. The chapter is broken into seven main sections also arranged in chiastic order:

Narrator comment: Nabal and his wife Abigail

Conversation 1: David, his men, and Nabal (1-2-3-4-5)

Action: Abigail prepares a gift for David (A-B-C-D)

Conversation 2: David and Abigail (E-F-E)

Reaction: God prepares a reward for David (D-C-B-A)

Conversation 3: David, his men, and Abigail (1-2-3-4-5)

Narrator comment: David and his wife Abigail

The verses in Conversations #1 and #3 parallel each other (1-2-3-4-5 / 1-2-3-4-5), as if events are being replayed to end with an opposite result. Abigail's dialogue in Conversation #2 is the focus of the chiasm, but there is a grand chiastic structure (A-B-C-D-E-F-E-D-C-B-A) that takes in Abigail's gift, the conversation, and God's reward.

11 Section 1: Narrator's Comment (Setting the scene)

Read First Samuel 25:2-3

5. What do we know about Nabal?

The name Nabal, comes from the common word *nabal* which means “fool or foolish.” There are five kinds of fool in the Scripture, and they range from those who are naïve, to those who are arrogantly ignorant, to those who are deliberately perverse and evil. Nabal is at the evil end of the scale. Here are some examples of how the word is used in Scripture:

Job 30:8 *“They were sons of fools [nabal], Yes, sons of vile men; They were scourged from the land.”*

Psalms 14:1 *“To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David. The fool [nabal] has said in his heart, ‘There is no God.’ They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none who does good.”*

Proverbs 30:21-22 *“For three things the earth is perturbed, Yes, for four it cannot bear up: For a servant when he reigns, a fool [nabal] when he is filled with food . . .”*

Isaiah 32:5-6 *“The foolish [nabal] person will no longer be called generous, nor the miser said to be bountiful; For the foolish person will speak foolishness, and his heart will work iniquity: To practice ungodliness, to utter error against the LORD, to keep the hungry unsatisfied, and he will cause the drink of the thirsty to fail.”*

There is a particular end reserved for the *nabal*, which we understand from its root word *nabel*. *Nabel* means to wither, fade, and fall away, like a dead leaf on a tree. (Psalm 1:1-6, 37:1-9)

Proverbs 30:32-33 *“If you have been foolish [nabel] in exalting yourself, or if you have devised evil, put your hand on your mouth. For as the churning of milk produces butter, and wringing the nose produces blood, so the forcing of wrath produces strife.”*

6. What do we know about Abigail?

סָכַל The word for understanding is *sakal* which means wise.

שָׁכַל It sounds like the word *sakal* which means foolishness. (It can be easy to mistake foolishness for understanding. You have to listen carefully.)

7. What does the house of Caleb add to the picture of Nabal?

The more renown men in Caleb's family have reputations as aggressive characters. The name Caleb actually means "dog" or having a dog-like character in being aggressive and forceful.

בִּלְכָה

Caleb (with an "a") is an aggressive dog that is under the will and restraint of a master, like a hunting dog that strains at his leash to be after the prey. (Not a bad thing if God is the master and the *caleb* is in pursuit of a promised inheritance in the LORD's kingdom.)

בִּלְכָה

Celeb (with an "e") is an aggressive, predatory dog that does not acknowledge his master—a feral dog that is running aggressively around the countryside. (In human terms, this is could describe a servant who has left his master in pursuit of an inheritance of his own making. It also is used to describe male cult prostitutes.)

11 Section 2: David, the young men, and Nabal (v4-13)

Read First Samuel 25:4-13

8. What is significant about the sheep-shearing?
9. Why does David send his young men to Nabal?
10. Did Nabal ask David and his men to do this?
11. Knowing what we know of Nabal's character, do you think Nabal cared about the welfare of his shepherds?
12. How does David instruct his young men to approach Nabal? (v5-8)
 - 1)
 - 2)
 - 3)
13. What was Nabal's reply? (v10)

Interesting how the names of the father's houses crop up like this. Nabal was introduced as a descendent of Caleb, and now we have mention of the son of Jesse, so a comparison is suggested. We talked about the name Caleb. Let's look at the name Jesse.

Jesse (Yissiy)

It is the along the lines of the word "this," or "something" as opposed to "nothing." Its root word yis is used Proverbs 8:21 where it says:

"That I may cause those that love me to inherit [yis]."

In other words, they will inherit "this" but what is "this"? It is something of substance, a reward of some kind, but you have to read the rest of the passage to see how "this" is defined. Jesse (Yissiy) is "this one" or "someone" but who?

This is a comparison between the somebodies and nobodies. By the world's standards, Nabal is "someone." He is a great man. He has much prosperity compared to David, the son of Yissiy, who has—what? A hand-out begged from a rich man? David asks that whatever comes to Nabal's hand be shared with his servants, but what is that? Who is this David? Is he the son of "someone"? In Nabal's eyes, David is the son of nobody.

14. What is David's reaction?

15. What is driving David into this fight with Nabal?

Application

Nothing gets you sidetracked from the LORD's mission, and the LORD's reward, like a fool. And a fool can get you into the kind of battle in which you should never engage. But we get into these battles because, let's face it, it is absolutely humiliating to have a fool make a fool out of us and force us to concede to their unreasonableness and unfairness. We can identify with David's situation. We have all run into fools in life, and we have to respond to them with some wisdom.

So here is a bit of wisdom given to us from the Proverbs:

"Do not answer a fool according to his folly [foolishness], lest you also be like him. Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes." – Proverbs 26:4-5

This is the paradox of wisdom. Does a wise person answer a fool or not?

If David answers Nabal, then he will be just as harsh and brutal and arrogant as Nabal—and we can see that he was well on his way toward that end. But if he doesn't answer him, then Nabal will think himself

wise in his own eyes in humiliating the king-to-be and might lead others to do the same, because people are watching. Nabal's own servant was watching and reported what he saw back to Abigail.

- Will answering back have any effect on the fool?
- Will it do any good for those who are watching and would be tempted to follow the *nabal's* example?
- Are you retaliating for your own glory and reputation or God's glory?
- What effect did his decision to answer this fool have on David?
- If there are negative effects, then how do you avoid them?

A note about the reward for works . . .

Our salvation and place in the kingdom is not based on works, but there is a reward for works (both good and bad). This is why we don't equate the reward to salvation. Salvation is by grace alone by faith alone in Christ alone, and not by works, lest any man should boast. Salvation is not earned, but rewards for works are. The LORD promises repeatedly to reward both the righteous and the wicked for their deeds.

"For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works." - Matthew 16:27 NKJV

"And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work." - Revelation 22:12 NKJV

The reward for works is spoken of in Matthew 6, Luke 6, and Colossians 3:23–25.