

## 11 Lesson 19: The Enemy in My Hand, pt 3 (First Samuel 25-26)

First Samuel 25 is broken into seven main sections also arranged in chiastic order:

<b>(Section 1)</b>	<b>Narrator comment:</b> Nabal and his wife Abigail	
<b>(Section 2)</b>	<b>Conversation 1:</b> David, his men, and Nabal	(1-2-3-4-5)
<b>(Section 3)</b>	<b>Action:</b> Abigail prepares a gift for David	(A-B-C-D)
<b>(Section 4)</b>	<b>Conversation 2:</b> David and Abigail	(E-F-E)
<b>(Section 5)</b>	<b>Reaction:</b> God prepares a reward for David	(D-C-B-A)
<b>(Section 6)</b>	<b>Conversation 3:</b> David, his men, and Abigail	(1-2-3-4-5)
<b>(Section 7)</b>	<b>Narrator comment:</b> 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 a similar end with an opposite result.

### Section 6: Conversation 3: David, the young men, and Abigail (v39-42)

- 1. David sends his men out with a message again, just as he did with Nabal. How does Abigail's response compare?**
- 2. Why would the author go to such lengths to create these kind of parallels?**

### Section 7: Narrator's comment: David and his wives (v43-44)

The closing narrator's note mirrors the opening verses by introducing wives. Where Abigail is introduced as Nabal's wife at the beginning, now she is David's wife. And in addition to Abigail, David takes Ahinoam the Jezreelitess. Altogether, David has three wives so far, and yet his first wife, Michal, is not with him.

The last time we saw Michal was in First Samuel 19 when she helped David escape from Saul when Saul had sent men to watch David's house. She deceived Saul's deputies, and Saul realized her deception too late, but the text didn't tell us what became of her after David fled.

Now we find out that Saul had done something wicked by giving Michal to a man named Paltiel, the son of Laish, who was from Gallim. She will not be restored to David until Second Samuel 3.

## Application

### The Young Men's Model

Young men are minor characters in the narrative and are featured three times.

- 1) David sends ten of his young men out with a message to bear witness of him and what he has done for Nabal
- 2) Another young man goes to Abigail and bears witness of how David and his men have impacted his own life.
- 3) David's young men are sent out with a final message—a marriage proposal—for Abigail.

Their only action in the narrative is to obey the king and deliver a message.

When David first sent his ten men out, he gives them this message:

*“David sent ten young men; and David said to the young men, ‘Go up to Carmel, go to Nabal, and greet him in my name. And thus you shall say to him who lives in prosperity: ‘Peace be to you, peace to your house, and peace to all that you have!’” - 1 Samuel 25:5-6*

It reminded me of what Jesus said when he sent out the twelve apostles in **Matthew 10:5-15**.

We, in a way, are the young men and the apostles. When we are sent out into the world with the message of peace that Christ has given us, we will meet Nabals and Abigails. They represent the two opposing responses to the King.

- **Who then are the Nabals?**
  
- **Who then are the Abigails?**

## Topics

So far, the issue of taking vengeance has been at the forefront of Chapters 24 and 25, but there have been several sub-themes that have come out of the narratives as well.

**In Chapter 24** (where David felt guilty for cutting Saul's robe), we touched on:

- Submission to authorities and harsh masters (1 Peter 2)
- Taking trophies for ourselves which was really a way of taking glory for ourselves.

**In Chapter 25**, we continued the “Wilderness of Paran” theme in David's decision to glorify himself or God when he comes to this crossroad in life. But then the author added other dimensions to the lesson:

Nabal modeled:

- The warning against the rich fool whose life was required of him in a night because he laid up treasure for himself, but was not rich toward God (**Luke 12:16-21**).

David's behavior brought up the issues of:

- The wisdom of answering a fool or not, and not getting entangled in the affairs of this world when we are commissioned as soldiers to fight the LORD's battles (**2 Timothy 2:3-5**).
- Not rising to the bait in those "I'm a somebody, you're a nobody" challenges (**2 Timothy 2:19**)
- Esteeming those who labor, including our intercessors who turn us from sin (**1 Thess 5:12-15**)
- Not returning evil for evil

Abigail modeled:

- The cost of choosing to make a lasting peace with the Davidic king and gaining a place in his kingdom instead of a temporary peace with a worldly master to keep your place in a kingdom already lost to you (**Matthew 16:24-27**)
- Correcting each other with humility (**2 Timothy 2:24-26**)
- Speaking with grace, seasoned with salt (**Colossians 4**)
- The need to be vigilant

### David's Model – Returning evil for evil

The theme of returning evil for evil is a major focus in David's grievance against Nabal. Last week we read in 1 Thessalonians 5:15:

*"See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all."*— **1 Thessalonians 5:15**

But there are a couple other places in the New Testament where this issue is mentioned, and I want to flesh out the details of those.

Peter mentions returning evil for evil in 1 Peter 3.

*"Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing." - **1 Peter 3:8-9***

Returning evil for evil gets you one kind of reward, and it is about us taking our satisfaction from one another. But we are called to seek satisfaction of a different sort and from a different source. Peter then goes on to quote Psalm 34:12-16:

*For 'he who would love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking deceit. Let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.'*

We previously studied Psalm 34 because it is prefaced to this time of exile in David's life. It was his reflection after falling into Philistine hands, and he had to pretend madness to escape. He acted like a fool then, and now with Nabal, he is again acting like a fool. But to what end? In both cases, he was trying to lengthen his own life by his own effort and improve his own lot in life, but his effort was

thwarted and he ended up looking like a fool. His effort took him farther and farther from the peace he desired. Peace was supposed to be the end goal and the reward, but returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling never brings peace.

Peter then goes on:

*And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. 'And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled.' But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. -*

**1 Peter 3:13–17**

Which is better—to suffer at the hands of the world for having done a good deed in conscience to God, or to suffer at the hand of God for having strayed into sin in avenging yourself?

*"For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles—when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you. They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead."*

*"If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter. For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?" - 1 Peter 4:3-5, 14–17*

We have to be discerning in how we look at the source of our suffering, because sometimes we bring it on ourselves. David suffered rebuke for his good works and righteousness, but only because he went looking to the world for a reward for that act. He did the right thing for the wrong reward and suffered for it. If he had done his charitable deed solely out of conscience toward God, he would have avoided Nabal's abuse. If David had followed through with his intent to murder, then he would have compounded his suffering by incurring God's wrath as an evildoer on top of Nabal's abuse.

We, too, can suffer the world's abuse when we look for a worldly reward for our spiritual righteousness. We can do good, but for the wrong reasons, and that can cause some of our suffering. This is downfall of the prosperity cults, where they believe that if you give and do good works, then you will receive a worldly form of prosperity in return.

If we become trespassers by choosing to take our own vengeance, then we will suffer God's wrath and not His reward. Not all suffering is going to reap a blessing from God.

In Romans 12, Paul echoes Peter's words:

*"Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion. Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live*

*peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord. Therefore 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."* - **Romans 12:14–21**

Paul quotes these two verses:

*"Vengeance is Mine, and recompense; Their foot shall slip in due time; For the day of their calamity is at hand, And the things to come hasten upon them."* - Deuteronomy 32:35

*"If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat; And if he is thirsty, give him water to drink; For so you will heap coals of fire on his head, and the LORD will reward you."* - Proverbs 25:21–22

- **Why is it the LORD's right to avenge?**

### Abigail's Model: Vigilance

Abigail's confession brings up the topic of being vigilant, which will carry into the next picture in Chapter 26. Being vigilant is something we are called to do, and there are a number of New Testament passages that apply what Abigail, David, and Nabal picture for us:

*"But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."* - **Luke 21:34-36**

- **If tonight was The Night—the night when your soul will be required of you—in whose shoes will you be standing: in Nabal's, Abigail's, or David's?**

*"For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, 'Peace and safety!' then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ" - **1 Thessalonians 5:2-9***

## Chapter 26: Return to Hachilah

This is our last picture in the series on taking vengeance, and now we are going to see what lessons David has learned from past experience. The narrative of Chapter 26 begins with a narrator's comment section, and then is broken into three conversations:

- 1) Between David and his men (set off by beginning and ending narrator comments)
  - 2) Between David and Abner
  - 3) Between David and Saul
- } (set off by beginning and ending narrator comments)

### Narrator's Opening Comment

#### Read Chapter 26:1-4

1. The Ziphites are familiar enemies. When did we last find them in the text?
2. What happened in Chapter 23 (Picture 9: Deliverance at the Rock of Escape)?
3. If events were following the same pattern, what would David do once he knew Saul was coming after him?

### David's Conversation with His Men

#### Read First Samuel 26:5-12.

4. What does he do this time?
5. The text seems to belabor that Saul lay within the camp. Why repeat that part of the picture in verse 5?

*So David arose and came to the place where Saul had encamped.  
And David saw the place where Saul lay,  
and Abner the son of Ner, the commander of his army.  
Now Saul lay within the camp,  
with the people encamped all around him.*

6. David proposes to go down to Saul in the camp. Why?
7. Why do his men think he wants to go down to Saul in the camp?
8. Who does David ask to go with him?
9. What reward does Abishai ask David for?

10. How does David respond?

11. When did we last see David having a conversation like this with his men?

Back in the cave at En Gedi when David took a piece of Saul's robe. Let's compare those two pictures:

Chapter 24	Chapter 26
David's men urge him to kill Saul.	
David didn't kill Saul but cut off a piece of Saul's robe.	
David had a fit of conscience.	
David rebuked his men as well as himself.	
David confronted Saul outside the cave	

Remember when we went through that first conversation between David and his men in the cave, we paid careful attention to the order in which things happened, and it was apparent from his own fit of conscience that David's rebuke was as much for himself as his men. We see almost the same wording in the rebuke now, but the rebuke is given at a different place in the order. David rebukes Abishai, and *then* takes the spear and water jug without a pricking of conscience.

12. Why was it wrong to cut the robe in the first instance but okay to take the spear and water jug this time? What is the difference?

### David's Conversation with Abner

**Read First Samuel 26:13-16.**

13. Where do David and Abishai go?

14. Who does David call out to?

15. What charge does he bring against them?

16. Why did Abner let down his guard?

17. Why make this a lesson for Abner and not Saul?

18. What has David learned about fighting with fools?