

The Lord Who Restrains Us

1 Samuel 25:1-44

¹ Now Samuel died, and all Israel assembled and mourned for him; and they buried him at his home in Ramah. Then David moved down into the Desert of Paran.

² A certain man in Maon, who had property there at Carmel, was very wealthy. He had a thousand goats and three thousand sheep, which he was shearing in Carmel. ³ His name was Nabal and his wife's name was Abigail. She was an intelligent and beautiful woman, but her husband was surly and mean in his dealings—he was a Calebite.

⁴ While David was in the wilderness, he heard that Nabal was shearing sheep. ⁵ So he sent ten young men and said to them, “Go up to Nabal at Carmel and greet him in my name. ⁶ Say to him: ‘Long life to you! Good health to you and your household! And good health to all that is yours!

⁷ “‘Now I hear that it is sheep-shearing time. When your shepherds were with us, we did not mistreat them, and the whole time they were at Carmel nothing of theirs was missing. ⁸ Ask your own servants and they will tell you. Therefore be favorable toward my men, since we come at a festive time. Please give your servants and your son David whatever you can find for them.’”

⁹ When David's men arrived, they gave Nabal this message in David's name. Then they waited.

¹⁰ Nabal answered David's servants, “Who is this David? Who is this son of Jesse? Many servants are breaking away from their masters these days. ¹¹ Why should I take my bread and water, and the meat I have slaughtered for my shearers, and give it to men coming from who knows where?”

¹² David's men turned around and went back. When they arrived, they reported every word. ¹³ David said to his men, “Each of you strap on your sword!” So they did, and David strapped his on as well. About four hundred men went up with David, while two hundred stayed with the supplies.

¹⁴ One of the servants told Abigail, Nabal's wife, “David sent messengers from the wilderness to give our master his greetings, but he hurled insults at them. ¹⁵ Yet these men were very good to us. They did not mistreat us, and the whole time we were out in the fields near them nothing was missing. ¹⁶ Night and day they were a wall around us the whole time we were herding our sheep near them. ¹⁷ Now think it over and see what you can do, because disaster is hanging over our master and his whole household. He is such a wicked man that no one can talk to him.”

¹⁸ Abigail acted quickly. She took two hundred loaves of bread, two skins of wine, five dressed sheep, five seahs of roasted grain, a hundred cakes of raisins and two hundred cakes of pressed figs, and loaded them on donkeys. ¹⁹ Then she told her servants, “Go on ahead; I'll follow you.” But she did not tell her husband Nabal.

²⁰ As she came riding her donkey into a mountain ravine, there were David and his men descending toward her, and she met them. ²¹ David had just said, “It's been useless—all my watching over this fellow's property in the wilderness so that nothing of his was missing. He has paid me back evil for good. ²² May God deal with David, be it ever so severely, if by morning I leave alive one male of all who belong to him!”

²³ When Abigail saw David, she quickly got off her donkey and bowed down before David with her face to the ground. ²⁴ She fell at his feet and said: “Pardon your servant, my lord,

and let me speak to you; hear what your servant has to say.²⁵ Please pay no attention, my lord, to that wicked man Nabal. He is just like his name—his name means Fool, and folly goes with him. And as for me, your servant, I did not see the men my lord sent.²⁶ And now, my lord, as surely as the Lord your God lives and as you live, since the Lord has kept you from bloodshed and from avenging yourself with your own hands, may your enemies and all who are intent on harming my lord be like Nabal.²⁷ And let this gift, which your servant has brought to my lord, be given to the men who follow you.

²⁸ “Please forgive your servant's presumption. The Lord your God will certainly make a lasting dynasty for my lord, because you fight the Lord's battles, and no wrongdoing will be found in you as long as you live.²⁹ Even though someone is pursuing you to take your life, the life of my lord will be bound securely in the bundle of the living by the Lord your God, but the lives of your enemies he will hurl away as from the pocket of a sling.³⁰ When the Lord has fulfilled for my lord every good thing he promised concerning him and has appointed him ruler over Israel,³¹ my lord will not have on his conscience the staggering burden of needless bloodshed or of having avenged himself. And when the Lord your God has brought my lord success, remember your servant.”

³² David said to Abigail, “Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, who has sent you today to meet me.³³ May you be blessed for your good judgment and for keeping me from bloodshed this day and from avenging myself with my own hands.³⁴ Otherwise, as surely as the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, who has kept me from harming you, if you had not come quickly to meet me, not one male belonging to Nabal would have been left alive by daybreak.”

³⁵ Then David accepted from her hand what she had brought him and said, “Go home in peace. I have heard your words and granted your request.”

³⁶ When Abigail went to Nabal, he was in the house holding a banquet like that of a king. He was in high spirits and very drunk. So she told him nothing at all until daybreak.³⁷ Then in the morning, when Nabal was sober, his wife told him all these things, and his heart failed him and he became like a stone.³⁸ About ten days later, the Lord struck Nabal and he died.

³⁹ When David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, “Praise be to the Lord, who has upheld my cause against Nabal for treating me with contempt. He has kept his servant from doing wrong and has brought Nabal's wrongdoing down on his own head.”

Then David sent word to Abigail, asking her to become his wife.⁴⁰ His servants went to Carmel and said to Abigail, “David has sent us to you to take you to become his wife.”

⁴¹ She bowed down with her face to the ground and said, “I am your servant and am ready to serve you and wash the feet of my lord's servants.”⁴² Abigail quickly got on a donkey and, attended by her five female servants, went with David's messengers and became his wife.⁴³ David had also married Ahinoam of Jezreel, and they both were his wives.⁴⁴ But Saul had given his daughter Michal, David's wife, to Paltiel son of Laish, who was from Gallim.

Introduction

In the previous chapter, the Lord delivered David's enemy Saul, who had brought him so much pain and misery, into his hands, alone and vulnerable. Yet David did not take matters into his own hands. He honoured God as the true king of Israel. It was the Lord's prerogative to appoint and remove kings. David also was deeply convicted for he knew taking Saul's life will be a wicked and godless act. The Lord rescued David from an act of treachery against God's appointed King and spared him consequence of such an action. Now, David finds

himself is in a very different situation. He is now dealing with a foolish man who has shown him great disrespect. Should he take matters into his own hands?

Nabal and Abigail

² *A certain man in Maon, who had property there at Carmel, was very wealthy. He had a thousand goats and three thousand sheep, which he was shearing in Carmel.* ³ *His name was Nabal and his wife's name was Abigail. She was an intelligent and beautiful woman, but her husband was surly and mean in his dealings—he was a Calebite.*

The narrator introduces us to two of the main characters. Abigail, an intelligent and beautiful woman, is married to a Nabal, a mean and foolish man. We quickly get to know who the troublemaker is and who the kind and reasonable person in this home is.

David's Request and Nabal's Reply

⁶ *Long life to you! Good health to you and your household! And good health to all that is yours!*

⁷ *“Now I hear that it is sheep-shearing time. When your shepherds were with us, we did not mistreat them, and the whole time they were at Carmel nothing of theirs was missing.”* ⁸ *Ask your own servants and they will tell you. Therefore be favorable toward my men, since we come at a festive time. Please give your servants and your son David whatever you can find for them.”*

¹⁰ *Nabal answered David's servants, “Who is this David? Who is this son of Jesse? Many servants are breaking away from their masters these days.”* ¹¹ *Why should I take my bread and water, and the meat I have slaughtered for my shearers, and give it to men coming from who knows where?”*

David's men provided protection for Nabal's sheep. It was a common practice for herdsmen to provide such services and be compensated for it. It was also hospitable for the owner to provide a meal during the sheep shearing season. David sent ten young men to ask Nabal to return the kindness and to be hospitable. Nabal was himself. He refused David's men in a very rude and insulting manner.

¹³ *David said to his men, “Each of you strap on your sword!” So they did, and David strapped his on as well. About four hundred men went up with David, while two hundred stayed with the supplies.*

David was angry. He instructed his men to arm themselves and he himself strapped a sword. He was going to confront Nabal and this time he took 400 armed men with him. Was David thinking about how all of this will help his cause and line up with his call to be king? How quickly things can escalate when we act hastily out of anger. A hasty response rarely ends well, much more a hasty response that is driven by anger.

Nabal's Servant

¹⁴ One of the servants told Abigail, Nabal's wife, "David sent messengers from the wilderness to give our master his greetings, but he hurled insults at them. ¹⁵ Yet these men were very good to us. They did not mistreat us, and the whole time we were out in the fields near them nothing was missing. ¹⁶ Night and day they were a wall around us the whole time we were herding our sheep near them. ¹⁷ Now think it over and see what you can do, because disaster is hanging over our master and his whole household. He is such a wicked man that no one can talk to him."

One of the servant's reported the whole incident to Abigail. There was no point in talking to Nabal because he was a wicked man. The servant confirms the incident that David's men were good to them and Nabal returned the favour with insults. The servant knew his master and foresaw what was going to happen. David was coming and Nabal is not going to back down or change his ways. Nabal's provocation will lead to bloodshed.

On the other side, David does not need any more provocation. He was determined to kill every male in Nabal's household (*²¹ David had just said, "It's been useless—all my watching over this fellow's property in the wilderness so that nothing of his was missing. He has paid me back evil for good. ²² May God deal with David, be it ever so severely, if by morning I leave alive one male of all who belong to him!"*)

Abigail's Vision and Wisdom

²³ When Abigail saw David, she quickly got off her donkey and bowed down before David with her face to the ground. ²⁴ She fell at his feet and said: "Pardon your servant, my lord, and let me speak to you; hear what your servant has to say. ²⁵ Please pay no attention, my lord, to that wicked man Nabal. He is just like his name—his name means Fool, and folly goes with him. And as for me, your servant, I did not see the men my lord sent. ²⁶ And now, my lord, as surely as the Lord your God lives and as you live, since the Lord has kept you from bloodshed and from avenging yourself with your own hands, may your enemies and all who are intent on harming my lord be like Nabal. ²⁷ And let this gift, which your servant has brought to my lord, be given to the men who follow you.

²⁸ "Please forgive your servant's presumption. The Lord your God will certainly make a lasting dynasty for my lord, because you fight the Lord's battles, and no wrongdoing will be found in you as long as you live. ²⁹ Even though someone is pursuing you to take your life, the life of my lord will be bound securely in the bundle of the living by the Lord your God, but the lives of your enemies he will hurl away as from the pocket of a sling. ³⁰ When the Lord has fulfilled for my lord every good thing he promised concerning him and has appointed him ruler over Israel, ³¹ my lord will not have on his conscience the staggering burden of needless bloodshed or of having avenged himself. And when the Lord your God has brought my lord success, remember your servant."

Abigail quickly worked things right. She sent her servants ahead with a generous portion of provision. This is what Abigail says to David:

1. Pay no attention to my husband for he is both wicked and foolish.

2. The Lord will deal with Nabal, and the Lord has kept you from bloodshed by taking things into your own hand.
3. God will make a lasting dynasty for David because David fights the Lord's battle.
4. Because you fight the Lord's battles, no wrongdoing will be found in you.
5. Even when someone comes to kill you, God will protect you and cast away your enemies.
6. When God has fulfilled all that He has promised, you will be glad that you do not have this needless bloodshed on your back.

(How I would paraphrase this conversation: My husband is wicked and foolish. This is the way he is. If I had known of your request, I would have acted differently. I am here to set things right. Now remember God has called you for something important. Please do not do something foolish that you will later regret.)

Here are few points to think about:

1. Abigail's vision: she knew what was happening. She knew God's plan for David and was aware of the present challenges he was facing. She knew God was going to make David a king with a lasting dynasty. It is clear that she looks to God and God has opened her eyes to all that he was doing, unlike Nabal whose eyes were only for his wealth.
2. Abigail's wisdom: Abigail also knew that if David were to avenge himself, this pointless bloodshed will jeopardize his future. She comes before David as a voice of wisdom.

The Lord Restrains Us

since the Lord has kept you from bloodshed and from avenging yourself with your own hands

³³ *May you be blessed for your good judgment and for keeping me from bloodshed this day and from avenging myself with my own hands.*

³⁴ *Otherwise, as surely as the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, who has kept me from harming you, if you had not come quickly to meet me, not one male belonging to Nabal would have been left alive by daybreak.*"

³⁹ *When David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, "Praise be to the LORD, who has upheld my cause against Nabal for treating me with contempt. He has kept his servant from doing wrong and has brought Nabal's wrongdoing down on his own head."*

1. The Lord has sent Abigail to restrain David from needless bloodshed. The words: 'the Lord has restrained (kept)' is mentioned four times. First, by Abigail and then three times by David. David recognized the wisdom and truth behind Abigail's words. David is quick to acknowledge that God has sent Abigail to prevent him from doing something foolish. He acknowledges and submits to the voice of godly counsel.
2. David did not kill Saul because he honoured God as the one who appoints and deposes kings. David now learns that he must represent God's justice and

righteousness in his dealings with others. He must honour God as the righteous Judge. He cannot take revenge into his own hands.

3. What happens when there is no restraint? Will anyone be safe when people act without restraint? Can anyone be saved when there is no restraint in confronting evil? What does this teach you about God?

Psalms 103:8-10

⁸ *The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.*

⁹ *He will not always accuse, nor will he harbour his anger forever;*

¹⁰ *he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities.*

(Note: Life was different during David's time. People did as they pleased and took matters into their own hands. It was the law of God that brought stability and order to Israel. These laws protected the weak and the vulnerable. That is why the weak and the downtrodden long for a king who will rule with mercy, justice and righteousness.)

4. The last thing we want for our lives is accumulating a long list of foolish and wicked things we regret doing. God is merciful and He does restore us, but the pain, regret and the consequences of such actions is something we don't want to see etched into our lives. God understands the consequences of bad decisions and seeks to preserve us from such a path. In the previous chapters, David always sought the Lord before he acted. Here he was angry and hasty and yet the Lord did not forsake him. The Lord sent Abigail to help him. The Lord is kind to us, even when we are weak and prone to make mistakes.
5. Have there been times where God has sent you people to keep you from doing something wrong or foolish? What are the lessons you learned about God and others through those incidents?

Prayer

1. The Lord will keep us from doing what is wrong.
2. We will grow to understand God's justice and compassion.
3. We will be able to discern the Lord's voice.
4. God will give us wisdom and understanding in knowing His will for this season.

Church

1. The Lord will be our strength and comfort. We will not be moved by what is happening around us.
2. The Holy Spirit will enable us to do His work. May we take time to be in presence of God filled with the Spirit.
3. God will continue to shape our lives through His word.
4. God will help us touch lives for His glory in our work place, schools and homes.
5. Even though we are unable to meet physically, we will grow in love and unity.
6. Ministries: Life Explorers, Redeeming Roses, Destiny Kids & Teens, Sunday School, Lifeline Youth, Worship Team, Pulpit Ministry & Church Leadership
 - God will open doors for us to reach others.
 - God will help us do His work during the MCO.
 - God will help us raise leaders.
7. God will continue to meet our needs and grant us wisdom to be good stewards of our finances and resources.

Covid-19

1. Children, Parents and Teachers
2. Healing and quick recovery for those who are affected.
3. Wisdom for Government
4. Economy/those who are out of work

Healing

1. Shantini: Recover from a fall that caused bleeding in her head
2. Suba

Malaysia

1. God will guide the leaders of our nation.
2. Healing that brings unity. God will raise His church to be His instrument of reconciliation.
3. God will restore Justice and Compassion. The leaders will look into the needs of the poor and vulnerable. We will care for the foreigners.
4. Revival in the Church of Malaysia