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Hold Up, Fool!

I Samuel 25

Intro: As stated previously, **ch24-26** address a common theme: David's **patience** as he waits 4 **YHWH**'s promise. In **ch24** this was seen in David's unwillingness 2 eliminate Saul when obvious providential circumstances gave him the opportunity. In this case, the only thing David had 2 take his stand & prevent his own men from taking Saul's life was the principle of the sanctity of the Lord's anointed. B/c Saul was the Lord's anointed king, David not only refused 2 take advantage of Saul, he also promised 2 never raise his hand against Saul (twice) & that went 4 his 600 men too.

But what happens when the circumstances change or the 1 prohibitive principle no longer applies? How will David react 2 an offense from someone who may be considered a peer or even lower than that? Will he show the same restraint? Will he defer 2 **YHWH**'s guidance & providence over his life & wait 4 the Lord 2 work this problem out too? B/4 we can answer those questions, we must 1st deal w/ a seminal event in Israel's history: the death of Samuel.

1- Samuel was 1 of the greatest spiritual leaders that Israel ever had. His ministry 4 Israel lived on as a heritage in many remarkable ways. **I Chron 9:22** indicates Samuel as the 1 who laid the foundation 4 organizing the Levites 4 service in the sanctuary, something that was codified by David later. **I Chron 26:27-28** reveals it was Samuel who 1st began 2 collect treasures 4 building the temple. **2 Chron 35:18** says that Samuel insisted on observing the Passover & kept Israel in remembrance of **YHWH**'s great deliverance of them from Egypt. Passages in Ps & Jer infer that Samuel was a man of great intercession on behalf of Israel (**12:23**). NT includes him in the Hall of Faith (**Heb 11:33**).

Sadly, it seems Samuel's ministry was unappreciated by Israel during his lifetime but at least he was honored in his death. It's a particularly human trait that we often fail 2 fully appreciate the spiritual blessings God put into our lives until we no longer have them. Maybe its b/c we're so used 2 being blessed that we just assume we're God's favorite. But that's not the case. God gives blessings w/ the expectation that we will use them 2 the fullest extent of our abilities in the manner & 4 the purpose He intends us 2 employ them. Blessings always come w/ responsibilities.

1 more thing. Samuel was a great man of God who was dedicated 2 the Lord & literally served **YHWH** his entire life & yet, now he dies. As godly as he was, it didn't save him from an earthly death b/c he was a descendent of Adam. Note: God's work in Israel didn't end when Samuel died. **Vs1** says **then Samuel died** but it also says **& David arose**. God's work is never dependent on only 1 man. It may begin w/ 1 man but it never ends w/ 1 man. God continues His work & sustains His work as He pleases, thru the willingness of other instruments who **surrender** 2 His service.

2-22- ch25 is a long narrative w/ very little narration (**little explanation from the narrator**).

The story is dominated by dialogue: 7 speeches from 4 different characters carry the story. Boy, what a cast of characters we have. These events take place in the deep south of Judean territory & the 1st new character is not even introduced by name, rather, he's introduced by status: **very rich**. What connotations does that bring 2 mind? The author then lists his extensive possessions & his activities: he's holding a **profitable** & **festive** sheep shearing time down in Carmel. It's only after his wealth & prominence is established that we are introduced 2 **Nabal** by name. This is not by accident but on point b/c it appears that Nabal's possessions take precedence over his own reputation. His life is determined by his property. He lives 2 defend his property &, as we'll see, he dies in debauchery, enjoying his property.

Of course, our opinion of Nabal isn't improved when we discover that his name means **fool**. As fools go, Nabal is the worst kind; not just an ill-mannered dope (blockhead) but, as **Isa 32:6** says, he's a **spiritual, moral & social disaster!**

In direct contrast 2 Nabal is his wife, Abigail. The author says she has **good sense & good looks**. But, of Nabal, he says **hard & nasty**. He's not dogging Nabal, he's simply telling the truth. Nabal's own servant, his wife & his enemy all concur w/ the author's assessment of Nabal; even his own words in **vs10-11** confirm the author's opinion of him. Nabal's nasty retort served as an answer 2 David's request (**thru emissaries**) 4 some provisions from his abundance. In David's mind, Nabal would've had a lot less sheep 2 shear if he & his men hadn't volunteer 2 protect his flocks & shepherds. Neither had David & Co. helped themselves 2 any of his flock. Now, technically, Nabal had never asked 4 David's help, but it's only right 2 expect a rich man like Nabal 2 show generous appreciation 4 services rendered. Sadly, Nabal didn't see it that way. He didn't just say "No," he added insult 2 injury by calling David a no account runaway slave & his men a bunch of nobodies who had no right 2 claim any of **my bread, my water & my meat!**

David might not have expected the answer he got from Nabal but he sure knew how 2 deal w/ it effectively. His solution is summed up in 1 word: sword (**3Xs in vs13**). W/ 600 fighting men at his disposal w/ nothing better 2 do & all day 2 do it; this problem can be handled pretty quickly. You might think Nabal has a big problem on his hands now but you would be wrong. David is the 1 w/ the problem. He just created it & he doesn't even realize it.

23-35- the dominant theme of this long passage is **providence**: that **often mysterious, always interesting way that God provides 4 His servant in their various needs**. In this particular case, **YHWH's** providence **restrains** David from acting impulsively, foolishly & sinfully. Four times the text recognizes **YHWH's** restraining action upon David's life: **26, 33, 34 & 39**. David himself recognized all of this as **YHWH's** own providential care over him & for him (**vs32**).

Now, in **vs13**, we must assume what 400 men w/ swords are going 2 do but **vs20-21** tells us plainly. This serves 2 stress the high stakes involved in Abigail's mission. If she fails, every male in Nabal's household will die. Fortunately, stupid Nabal had a sharp servant & a resourceful wife. The servant told Abigail what Nabal had done 2 David's servants, how good David & his men had been 2 them & how vicious they will be when they return 2 settle accounts. Why does he bring this problem 2 Abigail & not Nabal? **Vs17b**. Now Abigail gets a

lot of smart things done in a hurry. She puts together a nice gift bag (for 600) & off she goes. She doesn't bother to tell Nabal b/c she agrees w/ 17b!

When Abigail meets David, she prostrates herself b/4 him & asks to assume the guilt of the offense, even tho she wasn't present when it occurred. She wastes no time in pointing out the fact of YHWH's restraining providence over David's life (26). Apparently, Abigail knew Nabal would somehow meet his own appropriate end but she recognized her intercepting David as the Lord's work, but not for Nabal's benefit – **4 David's benefit!** She saw God holding back David from **hasty bloodshed & personal vengeance**. How so? Up to this point, Saul had been pursuing David illegally; he had no legal reason to arrest him. If David were to go to Carmel & wipe out Nabal & Co., he would be shedding innocent blood. Nabal didn't break a contract or go back on his word, he was just being an insulting jerk. There's no law against that. If David took Nabal out, Saul would have a valid, legal reason to pursue, arrest & execute him. David is simply acting upon a desire for personal vengeance which would be both wrong & foolish b/c it would work against God's plan for him. Abigail assures David that YHWH will certainly bring him into the kingship but he must leave that matter in YHWH's hands & he can't allow a murderous Saul or an obnoxious Nabal to draw him off course. Ultimately, YHWH's preventive providence means that David will be able to maintain stability in his reign later in life b/c he won't be haunted by any deep remorse or a guilty conscience b/c he carried out this horrible sin (31).

David quickly sees this truth & confesses that YHWH (thru Abigail) has kept him back from committing a tragic sin. Abigail's intervention kept David from walking in Saul's sandals, kept him from turning Nabal's Carmel into another Nob. The **rejected** king might practice utter **butchery** but that's **not** the way the **chosen** king is supposed to act. David wanted a fight & would have had it had not the Lord sent him a savior in a skirt.

36-44- Abigail's mission was successful but that's not the last word. When she told Nabal how close he came to really losing his head & what she did to avert it; right there at the breakfast table, his heart died & he became stone. We don't know if it's the shock of near extinction or the shock of Abigail's way to generous gift; either way, he's done. 10 days later he dies by YHWH hand. How foolish it was for David to put up such a fuss; God had the situation covered!

The lesson here is how God rescues His servants from their own stupidity, how He restrains them from acting out their sinful desires, how He graciously & firmly intercepts us on the road to foolishness. Nobody likes a roadblock but sometimes they're made by loving hands. Sometimes God's mercy is kindly sent to frustrate our purposes, to hold us back! When it does, it's important that we respond rightly in worship of God as David did in vs39.

Note: in ch24 David's the **restrainer**; he won't hurt Saul nor allow his men to do so. Yet, in ch25, David must be **restrained**; he's out for blood b/c of an insult. On the one hand, he refuses to harm the anointed king; on the other, he's willing to liquidate a private citizen. In ch24, David clearly saw what he must not do but in ch25, he doesn't see it at all, he doesn't make the connection between the situations w/ Saul & Nabal. Abigail must instruct him here.

I see this same **disconnect** in believer's lives today in many areas but none more so than

the area of **giving**. This problem is not just at Grace Chapel but occurs across the Body of Christ. Some may say it's a training issue: people haven't been properly instructed on how & why they should give. I'm sure there is something 2 that but at its core, this is not a matter of training – it's a matter of trusting. This is where the **disconnect** comes in. We trust God 2 forgive our sins, 2 save our souls, 2 fill us w/ His Spirit, 2 hear our prayers & 2 take us 2 heaven when we die. Yet, when it comes 2 finances, we're often hesitant 2 take God at His Word. **But I have responsibilities; I have bills 2 pay!** Well, who doesn't? The question is: are you trusting God 2 meet those needs or are you taking the matter into your own hands? Trusting God means you obediently honor God w/ your 1st fruits & trust Him 2 make up the difference. If you adamant about taking the matter into your own hands, understand that God is under no obligation 2 assist you in meeting your responsibilities. But, if you are giving obediently, taking God at His Word, then you will see Him work on your behalf. Ultimately, it's not your reputation that's at stake, its God's. If you are faithful 2 give as the Lord directs you & completely trust Him 2 meet all your legitimate financial needs & He fails 2 do so, then He is not the God He claims 2/b. Do you want 2 see God's hand working in your life? Thrust Him w/ your life – all of it.

This isn't a Jerry Lewis telethon, I'm just playing the part of Abigail – **instructing**; & a word 2 the wise is sufficient!

1 final thought: God often employs His providential care thru human instruments & **ch25** is a textbook case. There's no doubt that Abigail is the primary instrument that kept David from disaster (David admits it in **vs32**). But there's another human instrument of God's providence in this story who's not as prominent as Abigail but who's role is just as essential: the **unnamed servant** of **vs14-17**. Looking back, we realize how crucial his speech is. Everything depends on him speaking 2 Abigail. In fact, Abigail's work results solely from the servant information. He's a minor character w/ a major significance; his role is small but essential. Like the little servant girl who cared enough about her mistresses husband 2 mention she was sure the prophet in Samaria could cure him of leprosy. Everything in the story of Naaman depends on this small slave girl & her casual remark about the power of Israel's God. This should give encouragement 2 all of God's unnamed servants b/c each of us can play a critical role in someone's life. Has anyone ever heard of Edward Kimball? Not many outside of seminary. He was the unknown, inconspicuous Sunday School teacher that led a young D.L. Moody 2 Christ. The world never heard much from Ed Kimball but it was shaken by the preaching of D. L. Moody, the greatest evangelist of the late 19th century. Don't ever think your ministry is small or unnoticed. If you are where God has called you, do the work faithfully, God sees & will use your efforts 2 expand His kingdom & glorify His name. What could be a greater reward than that?

