

Session 4

June 23, 2019

“ABIGAIL: INTERVENING FAITH”

1 Samuel 25:2-3, 14-17, 23-28, 32-35

I don't like to clean up my own messes, much less somebody else's. Yet one of my favorite Old Testament stories is that of Abigail, the quick-thinking wife who deftly swooped in to clean up the monumental mess that her husband had made. The story is filled with adventure and intrigue. But it is also filled with a steadfast trust in the Lord's ability (and His willingness) to clean up our messes...even when somebody else made them. The story unfolds in four scenes:

Introduction (vv. 2-3). The description of the players in this drama is brief but significant. Nabal was a man known for both his wealth and his stupidity. He was a successful businessman monetarily, but was a brutally mean man, renowned for his treachery, and nicknamed *Nabal*, which means “fool.” His lineage from Caleb is also significant; it means he was from the tribe of Judah, just like David, whom he stupidly chose to offend. In contrast stands his dear wife Abigail. While Nabal is foolish, Abigail is intelligent. While Nabal is gruff and surly, Abigail is delicate and beautiful. She was the beauty; he was the beast. The setting of this drama is near the small town of Carmel, where Nabal's field hands were busy shearing sheep for their wretched boss.

Situation (vv. 14-17). The intervening verses provide the background leading up to the crisis that nearly cost Nabal and his men their lives. At this time, King Saul was still on the throne. But David had been anointed as the coming king and his growing popularity led to a burgeoning following. David's men were well known by Nabal's, for David had spent time in the area and his fighting men had offered protection to the herdsmen and their flocks during their semi-nomadic wanderings (vv. 15-16). Upon discovering that Nabal's herdsmen were shearing sheep, David sent ten men to them to respectfully ask for provisions. Nabal's rude brush-off of David (vv. 10-11) offended both his own herdsmen as well as their future king. In response, David armed 400 of his men and set off to annihilate the fool and his entire company (v. 13; 21-22). Wisely (and fearfully!), one of Nabal's men realized the danger their boss had put them in and went to Abigail for help.

Intervention (vv. 23-28). Placating this warrior David was not a result of Abigail's intelligence nor her beauty, but rather her reverence. From high upon her donkey, to low before the soon-to-be king, Abigail's actions oozed with humility. She chose not to defend nor justify the actions of Nabal her husband but reasoned with David on three different fronts. First, she affirmed what David already knew: Nabal the fool was simply living up to his name (v. 25). Second, she admitted that things would have turned out much differently if she had met with the ten young messengers personally (v. 25). Thirdly, she saw in her encounter with David, God's providential hand both in preserving her household and in the opportunity it presented to pledge her allegiance to the king-elect (vv. 26, 28). This is where “intervening faith” came in. Hence, David's change of heart was not the result of the gift she brought (v. 27), but of the humility and respect in which it was offered.

Acceptance (vv. 32-35). Overwhelmed by Abigail's act of submission, David quickly cooled down and relented of the punishment he was about to inflict on her foolish husband. While Abigail's prudence was acknowledged, "the Lord God of Israel," was praised and blessed as the One who had moved her to intervene, stopping David from carrying out his act of vengeance and saving Nabal and his men from violent death. Ironically, ten days later, Nabal was struck by God and died, and Abigail was invited to marry the next king of Israel.