

“Two Jerks & A Jewel” 1 Samuel 25:1-42

Wednesday 11/20/19 – Jeff Lyle

The differences between men and women are far more than any of us are able to number. God made males and females to be distinct from one another. This important determination from God is seen in human anatomy, personality and the different ways that men and women tend to lean in our natural instincts. Fewer places in the Bible put on a clearer display of the differences between men and women than the part of David’s life where he meets the woman who would become his future wife. Sadly, for David, he is presented with all of his flaws in this portion of his story. Abigail, on the other hand, is revealed to us as a powerful woman, full of grace and wisdom. David and Abigail are not alone in this account. The largest, darkest and coldest shadow is cast upon them both by a man named Nabal, Abigail’s first husband. Take note of how these two men at their worst are contrasted by the Holy Spirit with this woman who is at her best. May we all, male and female, learn from both the excellent and powerful examples from all three of these lives.

I. Nabal: The Fool (2-11)

A. His tremendous wealth (2) – “There was a man in Maon whose business was in Carmel. The man was very rich; he had three thousand sheep and a thousand goats.”

We are formally not given his name until the next verse that we read, but Nabal was a very well-known, successful businessman in his city. His business enterprise had brought him much material success. People would have been impressed by the wealth of Nabal. It would seem, as we are about to discover, that Nabal had his identity wrapped up in his successful accomplishments. Rather than giving God glory for his wealth and using it to enrich others, Nabal fell into the trap that is so common for the extravagantly rich. He viewed himself as superior and self-sufficient which caused him to look down on others. This man, frankly, was a jerk.

B. His terrible witness (3) – “Now the name of the man was Nabal, and the name of his wife Abigail. The woman was discerning and beautiful, but the man was harsh and badly behaved.”

Most of us have encountered a Nabal during our lives. The verses that describe this man leave us with no other conclusion than to recognize him as a fool. In fact, that is exactly what his name means. He is seen to be a stereotypical hardhead who is harsh cruel, unteachable, abrasive and obstinate. He is married to a beautiful woman who is full of wisdom from God. Abigail is not the first woman favored by God to end up married to a

loser. The witness of Nabal's life was known to all, and nobody that we read about was blessed to know him.

C. His perfect opportunity (4-8) - "David heard in the wilderness that Nabal was shearing his sheep. 5 So David sent ten young men. And David said to the young men, "Go up to Carmel, and go to Nabal and greet him in my name. 6 And thus you shall greet him: Peace be to you, and peace be to your house, and peace be to all that you have. 7 I hear that you have shearers. Now your shepherds have been with us, and we did them no harm, and they missed nothing all the time they were in Carmel. 8 Ask your young men, and they will tell you. Therefore, let my young men find favor in your eyes, for we come on a feast day. Please give whatever you have at hand to your servants and to your son David."

When sheep-shearing season came, it was a common custom for the owner of the flocks to celebrate. Though it was not mandated by any law, it was also customary for the sheep-owner to reward anyone who had played a significant role in helping the sheep survive another season without them being killed by wild beasts, stolen by an enemy or becoming lost from the rest of the flock. Though David was still a fugitive from Saul, he and his growing number of men were living close enough to Nabal's flocks to offer protection. Nabal benefitted greatly by the presence of David and his men, so David simply asked for a little courtesy when the time came for the sheep to be shorn. Knowing that there would be a feast, David humbly asked Nabal to reward him and his men for the year of benefit he had received from them. Nabal's own herdsmen could testify to him on David's behalf. David had been a blessing so, reasonably, he sought a return blessing according to the customs of his day. This is where Nabal's true form becomes clear.

D. His tactless words (9-12, 14) - "Who is David? Who is the son of Jesse? There are many servants these days who are breaking away from their masters. 11 Shall I take my bread and my water and my meat that I have killed for my shearers and give it to men who come from I do not know where...? 14 Behold, David sent messengers out of the wilderness to greet our master, and he railed at them."

Nabal, bloated with arrogance, not only declined David's request for reward, he did it in an insulting fashion. Nabal basically declared that David was a nobody who meant nothing to him. He also hinted that he viewed David as a rebellious servant against Saul who should expect absolutely nothing from a man such as himself. Not for the first time, nor the last, David's honorable ways are met with great opposition and rejection. Even the testimony of Nabal's own employee in verse fourteen describes Nabal's response as his "railing" on David. The Hebrew word indicates that Nabal rejected David with great contempt. He expressed

disgust for honorable David and used words that belittled the man of God. This would be the most regrettable (and final!) speech that Nabal ever released.

II. David: The Hothead (12-17)

A. Her king's ego was bruised (12) - "So David's young men turned away and came back and told him all this."

Here comes trouble! When David's servants were sent back home with nothing but a humiliating report for David, the fires started burning. Not only did David not receive the customary blessing he sought, he was given a word of clear and pointed rejection from the very man whom he had blessed and helped for a year. Few things stir a warrior than being dishonored. David would not be sitting still in humility and grace after hearing this terrible news from his servants. This was going to get ugly.

B. Her king's anger was kindled (13) - "Every man strap on his sword!" And every man of them strapped on his sword. David also strapped on his sword. And about four hundred men went up after David..."

Not much needs to be said here. When David's ego took a hit, the crack created allowed David's indignant rage to pour forth. This was a very difficult time for David even before Nabal humiliated him. The chapter opens with what would have been heartbreaking news to David. Samuel, his friend and mentor, died and was buried. David would not have been allowed to publicly mourn or attend the burial for the great man of God because David was still in hiding. Saul continued to hunt David which made life on the run very intense. While David knew that he could not fight back against the king, Nabal was a different story. Perhaps the combination of grief over Samuel and frustration over not being allowed to fight Saul elevated the flames of anger in David's heart toward Nabal. The result was that David took 400 men to go up to remove Nabal from the earth. This massive display of power against one man and his household would be the equivalent of trying to kill a spider with a grenade. David was going to put Nabal in his place and remove all doubt about who had the greater honor and power. For the first time in his story, we see a clear character flaw pouring forth from the man who would be king. David's rage was on full display.

C. Her king's generosity was spurned (14-17) - "But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, "Behold, David sent messengers out of the wilderness to greet our master, and he railed at them. 15 Yet the men were very good to us, and we suffered no harm, and we did not miss anything when we were in the fields, as long as we went with them. 16 They were a wall to us both by night and by day, all the while we were with them keeping the sheep. 17 Now therefore know this and consider what you should do, for harm is determined against our master and against all his house, and he is such a worthless man that one cannot speak to him."

The discernment of Abigail was clearly known to her household. One of Nabal's servants learned about what was coming their way. Instead of going to Nabal, who was a proven fool, the young man went to Abigail. He explained the dire situation to her and recounted the whole story of Nabal's mistreatment of David even though David had been nothing but good to Nabal. This servant knew where to go when wisdom was needed. Nabal never entered into his mind. Abigail was the one who had the touch of God on her life. The servant told her that she should urgently decide what to do because David and 400 angry soldiers were about to descend on Nabal's land.

IV. Abigail: The Mediator (18-31)

A. Strength revealed in her clarity of action (18-20) - "Then Abigail made haste and took two hundred loaves and two skins of wine and five sheep already prepared and five seahs of parched grain and a hundred clusters of raisins and two hundred cakes of figs, and laid them on donkeys. 19 And she said to her young men, "Go on before me; behold, I come after you." But she did not tell her husband Nabal. 20 And as she rode on the donkey and came down under cover of the mountain, behold, David and his men came down toward her, and she met them."

Abigail was not only a woman of wisdom, she knew how to take action. She prepared a feast in a moment's notice for David's hungry men. David had asked for food, and she knew exactly how to make that happen. She was also wise in what she did not do. She never said a word to her foolish, arrogant husband. There was no need to add trouble to trouble so she left him in the dark while she acted quickly to save his life. How easy it would have been to rid herself of such a burdensome husband. All she would have had to do was...nothing. If she had not acted, David would have arrived and put an end to Nabal. Being the man that Nabal was, it would have likely made her life much better to see him exit planet earth. Yet, Abigail was an honorable woman and acted decisively to get between these two men who were acting like jerks. Nabal was a hard-head and David was a hot-head. Abigail was the only one with a clear head. She got the feast together and loaded it all up on her ancient equivalent of an

SUV. Soon enough, she saw David and the large group of determined men marching her way. This was go-time!

B. Strength revealed in her humility of heart (23-24) - “When Abigail saw David, she hurried and got down from the donkey and fell before David on her face and bowed to the ground. 24 She fell at his feet and said, “On me alone, my lord, be the guilt. Please let your servant speak in your ears, and hear the words of your servant.”

Abigail gave David the honor that her sorry husband failed to give him. She wasted no time at seeking to yank the lit fuse out of the bomb of David’s anger and thirst for revenge. She postured her body in humility and greeted David with grace and honor. This would have given the noble warrior a powerful interruption. It is hard for anger to swell in our hearts when someone humbles themselves in our presence seeking mercy from us. Abigail was not done. She kept speaking words of grace to the fires of David’s rage.

C. Strength in her honesty of reasoning (25-31)

1. Honest about her husband (25) - “Let not my lord regard this worthless fellow, Nabal, for as his name is, so is he. Nabal is his name, and folly is with him. But I your servant did not see the young men of my lord, whom you sent.”

2. Honest about David’s potential mistake (26-28) - “Now then, my lord, as the Lord lives, and as your soul lives, because the Lord has restrained you from bloodguilt and from saving with your own hand, now then let your enemies and those who seek to do evil to my lord be as Nabal. 27 And now let this present that your servant has brought to my lord be given to the young men who follow my lord. 28 Please forgive the trespass of your servant. For the Lord will certainly make my lord a sure house, because my lord is fighting the battles of the Lord, and evil shall not be found in you so long as you live.”

3. Honest about the better path to pursue (29-31) - “If men rise up to pursue you and to seek your life, the life of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of the living in the care of the Lord your God. And the lives of your enemies He shall sling out as from the hollow of a sling. 30 And when the Lord has done to my lord according to all the good that he has spoken concerning you and has appointed you prince over Israel, 31 my lord shall have no cause of grief or pangs of conscience for having shed blood without cause or for my lord

working salvation himself. And when the Lord has dealt well with my lord, then remember your servant.”

Wow, wow, wow!!! Abigail comes in like a laser-guided missile of kindness, grace, wisdom and humility. David was not going to be able to resist this physically beautiful woman (see verse 3) who was showing him honor. Abigail was not taking the posture of authority as she sought to dissuade him from his mission. With words of humility, grace and Spirit-filled reason, this godly woman spoke to David about his destiny. She reminded him of his calling from God to become the king. She defused his anger by redirecting his thoughts from her corrupt husband and back onto David’s noble anointing. Multiple times, she reinforces to David that he certainly has the power and ability to get even with Nabal, but he does not have any need to do so. David had bigger enemies to fight than some proud fool who had slighted him. Abigail proves herself to be wise and influential without seeking to be manipulative and dishonest. This is what a kingdom woman should look like: bold but kind, powerful yet patient, wise but restrained, gentle but fully intentional. What a woman of God!

V. Abigail: The Highly Favored (32-42)

A. Abigail received favor with King David (32-35) - “And David said to Abigail, “Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me! 33 Blessed be your discretion, and blessed be you, who have kept me this day from bloodguilt and from working salvation with my own hand! 34 For as surely as the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, who has restrained me from hurting you, unless you had hurried and come to meet me, truly by morning there had not been left to Nabal so much as one male.” 35 Then David received from her hand what she had brought him. And he said to her, “Go up in peace to your house. See, I have obeyed your voice, and I have granted your petition.”

David is a hothead, but he is also a man upon whom the Holy Spirit has rushed. David was momentarily angry, but he was not a prolonged fool like Nabal. When Abigail released the word of wisdom to David, he recognized the accent of God in her speech. He sees clearly the mistake he was about to make, and he humbly repents, giving Abigail the credit for snapping him out of his rage with her words of restraint. As he thanks Abigail for her intervention, he says something that few men would have said to a woman in that day. He tells Abigail that he is going to obey her. This is the favor of God upon a woman her exercised her influence to prevent disaster.

B. Abigail received deliverance from Nabal (36-38) - “And Abigail came to Nabal, and behold, he was holding a feast in his house, like the feast of a king. And Nabal's heart was merry within him, for he was very drunk. So, she told him nothing at all until the morning light. 37 In the morning, when

the wine had gone out of Nabal, his wife told him these things, and his heart died within him, and he became as a stone. 38 And about ten days later the Lord struck Nabal, and he died.”

Abigail had to head back home, likely exhausted from the day's events. When she gets back to the house, there is her husband doing what fools do. Ignorant and drunk, Nabal is clueless about how close he had come to dying under the wrath of David. He also had no idea that his godly wife had just saved his skin by getting between him and the doom headed his way. All Nabal cared about was Nabal. Feasting on some of the food that he should have shared with David and his men, Nabal drank himself into a stupor until he passed out asleep. When the sun rose the next day, Abigail told him of the previous day's drama. The bible indicates that Nabal had some sort of stroke or other physical seizing when he realized that he had nearly gotten himself killed. He never recovered from that moment. A little more than a week after his stroke, God took Nabal completely out. This is the destiny of anyone who determines to live as a fool against the ways of God. The wage of sin is death. Nabal experienced that truth the hard way.

C. Abigail inherited security for her future (39-42) - “When David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, “Blessed be the Lord who has avenged the insult I received at the hand of Nabal, and has kept back his servant from wrongdoing. The Lord has returned the evil of Nabal on his own head.” Then David sent and spoke to Abigail, to take her as his wife. 40 When the servants of David came to Abigail at Carmel, they said to her, “David has sent us to you to take you to him as his wife.” 41 And she rose and bowed with her face to the ground and said, “Behold, your handmaid is a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord.” 42 And Abigail hurried and rose and mounted a donkey, and her five young women attended her. She followed the messengers of David and became his wife.”

David learned once again the benefit of welcoming God to fight his battles. God had sent Abigail to keep David from an unjust massacre. When he learned that Nabal had died, David immediately thought of the beautiful, gracious woman who was now a widow. He offered Abigail the opportunity to become his wife and she said yes. What an amazing ending to a scene filled with all sorts of potential for disaster! Nabal gets the grave, David gets the girl, Abigail gets a gentleman.

D. Abigail held vindication in her arms (1 Chronicles 3:1) – “These are the sons of David who were born to him in Hebron...Daniel, by Abigail the Carmelite...”.

Later on, when the story of King David is fully recorded, we find this little statement that holds so much treasure for Abigail. David and she had a baby boy whom they named Daniel. His name means “God is my judge.”

God had preserved and prospered her in a difficult marriage to a foolish man. He had honored her humble commitment to dissuade David from wiping out her husband after he sinned against David. He took care of her when she was a widow by supplying her a king for a new husband. When she held her new son in her arms, she knew that God's verdict on her life was one of favor. What a jewel this Abigail was.