

Passing God's Test

1 Samuel 25-27

Key Bible Texts

1 Samuel 25-27

Key Bible Verse(s)

“And David said to Abigail, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me: And blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, which has kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand.” (1 Samuel 25:32-33)

Background to the Study

At the beginning of this chapter, it is noted that Samuel died. David did not go to the funeral, though Samuel had been a great mentor to him. It is possible that David realized Saul's spies would be at the funeral and it was not a safe place for him to be. Instead, David retreated to the wilderness. Nabal's name means “a fool.” The word churlish in vs. 3 means “hard to deal with.” The phrase “son of Belial” (vs. 17) was used to refer to someone considered to be a wicked, worthless man. David's irritation at Nabal was not unfounded. First, the social etiquette of the day required that travellers were to be fed, regardless of number. Nabal was financially able to do this. Second, David and his men had been protecting Nabal's men and his sheep, and a meal was the least he should have offered as a token of appreciation. Abigail was a wise woman, and God used her wisdom to stop David from making an unwise and extremely harmful action – taking vengeance upon Nabal and also killing innocent people. Abigail clearly understood that David would be king. Nabal indicated his unwillingness to acknowledge that when he said, “Who is David?” (Ch. 25 vs. 10). The rest of that verse shows that Nabal was a backer of King Saul. Abigail honoured David; fourteen times she called him “lord.” David showed his wisdom by listening to the advice of this woman and admitting his error. The phrase “he became as a stone” (vs. 37), probably means that Nabal had a stroke. Ten days later, he died. Michal was David's first wife, Saul's daughter, whom Saul had given to David. When David fled, Saul gave Michal to Phalti, forcing her into adultery. No doubt Saul felt that removing Michal from David's household further weakened David's claim to the throne by severing his legal ties with royalty. When Abigail became David's wife, Nabal's property and riches came to him also. The land was near Hebron, where David later made his royal residence.

Saul had ample warnings to change from his murderous ways. On an earlier occasion, after David had spared his life, he seemed to have repented and had promised to leave David alone, but that resolve was not genuine. Evil had taken root in Saul's life and was firmly in control of him. With 3,000 men, Saul resumed his hot pursuit of David. This pursuit of David was encouraged by the tale-bearing Ziphites. They betrayed David's location to Saul as a means of obtaining favour from him. The Ziphites had two distinct reasons why they should not have done this. They were related to Caleb, one of Israel's founding spiritual giants, though they shared none of his spiritual

valour. Secondly, like David, they were members of the tribe of Judah. They had every reason to be loyal, but they went in the opposite direction, jeopardizing the life of a man of God. Still, the Lord's hand of protection was on David, and all their efforts were futile. David had a strategic need to know Saul's location so he could stay ahead of him. Through his network of spies, David kept Saul's exact location and the strength of the army with him. Ch. 26 Vs. 12 mentions that a "deep sleep from the Lord was fallen upon them." God's hand was clearly protecting David. This was the second distinct time that David had the opportunity to take Saul's life if he had wanted to do so. The first time is noted in chapter 24 where we see that the locations, David's companions, the items removed from Saul, and the verbal exchanges between David and Saul were all different. Abner was the captain of Saul's army and also his cousin (1 Samuel 14:50). Abishai was David's nephew. "Sleeping within the trench" means that Saul was in the camp and the baggage and wagons were around the outside. On this occasion, as in the first, David's men urged him to take Saul's life. David's refusal was based on his reverence for God and the fact that Saul had been appointed by God. David had learned to discern and respect anything that had God's signature on it, and God had directed Samuel to anoint Saul as king. David knew that even when Saul had forfeited his kingship, respect for God's appointment was still needed. Taking Saul's water jug and spear proved that David had been right beside him, and also that he had no intention of taking Saul's life. The spear was a king's symbol of authority. The ensuing dialogue between Saul and David was their last. David knew that despite his words, Saul could not be trusted, so he went again to Philistia. The Philistines had five major cities and five co-rulers. Achish was the ruler of Gath, and he allowed David to move to Ziklag. From there, David and his men made guerrilla-type attacks that benefited and helped both the Philistines and the Israelites. The group of people with David may have numbered as many as two or three thousand.

A TESTIMONY FROM OUR DAY

One time, our family had the opportunity to observe a glassblower at work. She was shaping a vase, which was mounted on a tube so she could put it into the furnace for heating. Repeatedly she placed the vase in the furnace, then took it out and shaped it by rolling it against newspapers that she held in her gloved hand. The glass was so hot that the newspapers charred. When the artist was satisfied with the vase, she prepared to remove it from the tube. She said that this was one of the most critical points of the whole process. The vase was heated again and then cooled to a particular temperature. Next, she gave a sharp blow at the exact point of the mounting. She told us that sometimes a vase breaks under a sharp blow, and then all her labour is wasted. Watching the glassblower was an object lesson in how God works on us. He may allow us to be heated in the furnace of affliction – financial problems, stresses, difficult relationships, loss of a loved one – so that we can be shaped as He desires. If God in His infinite wisdom allows a "sharp blow" as a test, we do not want to "shatter" at that moment. God had been shaping David in the furnace of affliction. He had been running and hiding from Saul for some years. At the time of our text, David experienced a sharp blow – a test of his integrity. When he had the opportunity to take his enemy's life, David did not shatter. He knew that God had appointed Saul to be king and that, in His own time, God would work out every detail. His respect for God's anointed led David to act honourably. God can help us behave honourably also when a sharp blow comes to us. We cannot survive in our strength, but by God's strength, we can be victorious.

A Closer Look

Question 1

What was David's reaction when he heard Nabal's response to his request?
I Samuel 25: 9-12

Question 2

What are some possible reasons that Abigail stepped in to remedy the situation? What was David's attitude when Abigail confronted him and prevented him from acting rashly and unwisely (1 Samuel 25)? Name three things we can learn from his response.

Question 3

Think of a time in your life when you wanted to seek revenge. How did you overcome that feeling?

Question 4

What did Saul say when he found that David had spared his life again? Why do you think God allowed David this opportunity to kill Saul? I Samuel 26: 8, 9, 7, 21-25

Question 5

David had several opportunities to take matters into his own hands (chapters 24-26). How did David "behave himself wisely?"

Question 6

How can actions in small matters of integrity prepare us to act honourably in a crisis?

Take Home

God used Abigail to prevent David from taking justice into his own hands. If we will let Him, God will help us handle difficult situations when they arise. A deep respect for God and His actions and timing can help us stay right in our hearts. God may be working on us today, but He will bring us through if we honour Him.