

Title: God's Restraining Love

Scripture: 1 Samuel 25

Series: God, the True King!

1. Introduction:

- a. Chapter 25 of 1 Samuel forms a trilogy with chapters 24 and 26 that deal with the issue of giving place to the vengeance of God instead of seeking to exact our own retribution.
- b. In chapter 24, we rejoiced in a victorious David that refused to avenge himself. He graciously allowed king Saul to live because Saul was the Lord's anointed.
 - i. Our last sermon taught us much in regards to loving our enemies.
- c. Unfortunately, after a great victory, sometimes we can experience great defeat. Blinded by the victory, the man of God can let his guard down and fail God with the same sin although under different circumstances. That's what we have here.
- d. However, our passage offers us the hope of God's intervening Spirit, who often restrains us from committing terrible sin.

2. Verses 1-3: The death of Samuel: Now Samuel died. And all Israel assembled and mourned for him, and they buried him in his house at Ramah. Then David rose and went down to the wilderness of Paran. (2) And 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. He was shearing his sheep in Carmel. (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; he was a Calebite.

- a. Our passage sets the setting for the events and introduces most of our main characters.
- b. We read about the death of Samuel. Although stated briefly, the news of Samuel's death is significant. A great light in Israel had been extinguished. If you remember, Samuel had been the means by which the Word of God had been regiven to the people.
 - i. Our passage teaches us that all men, even great and godly men, will one day leave this earth. Samuel was no exception. And although God uses some men greatly, we must never look to the man but the God who supplies his Spirit to work wondrous

deeds of grace among His people. In other words, Samuel was dead, but God is not!

- ii. With Samuel's death, all hope of reconciliation between Saul and David dies. Samuel seemed to be the only bridge remaining between these two men. Therefore, David, hard-pressed, runs to the wilderness of Paran.
 - c. It is at this point that we are introduced to **Nabal and Abigail**.
 - i. **Nabal**, meaning foolish, is described as a **harsh and badly behaved man** from an honorable family of Judah. He is exceedingly wealthy but incredibly greedy. His spiritual ruin becomes evident to all.
 - ii. In contrast to Nabal, we are introduced to his wife, **Abigail**. She is **discerning** (full of wisdom), generous, and beautiful. In every respect, she is portrayed first and foremost as a godly woman.
 1. **Side note**: We must be careful with the word beautiful. Although Abigail had external beauty, our story makes it abundantly clear that Abigail's true beauty came from her godliness.
 2. As Scripture put it in **1 Peter 3:3-4** Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear— (4) but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious.
3. Verses 4-9: David's Expectation: 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.'" (9) When David's young men came, they said all this to Nabal in the name of David, and then they waited.

- a. David's men had apparently protected Nabal's livestock from outside and inside threats. They had treated Nabal's men well and with brotherly kindness.
 - i. Undoubtedly, this had been reported to Nabal.
 - b. Assuming that Nabal would want to express his appreciation for such care, David sends ten men to ask for a generous gift.
 - c. It was the expectation that Nabal would respect both David and his men for past kindness and because of their reputation.
 - i. Remember, the actions of David's men had substantially enriched Nabal by assuring that he suffered no loss.
4. Verses 10-11: Nabal's foolishness of speech: And Nabal answered David's servants, "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?"
- a. Nabal denies David's request, but he does so with biting words. Nabal's tone is striking, and we cannot help but consider the power of spoken words.
 - i. **Proverbs 15:1-2** A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. (2) The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, but the mouths of fools pour out folly.
 - 1. Nabal pours out foolishness and stirs up anger. Nothing good can come from such speech.
 - 2. Let us be cautious with our speech.
 - ii. Beloved, compare Nabal's words with the speech of the godly as described in **Colossians 4:6** Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.
 - b. Look at the foolishness of Nabal's words.
 - i. **Who is David? Who is the son of Jesse?**
 - 1. Nabal questions David's importance. David, Nabal asserts, is nothing!
 - a. He deliberately ignores and belittles how God had used David in the kingdom for deliverance (diminishes).
 - ii. **There are many servants these days who are breaking away from their masters.**

1. Nabal maligns David's character by calling him an ungrateful runaway slave. The truth was that David was an afflicted and persecuted faithful servant (sin).
 - iii. **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?**
 1. Nabal asserts that David's men are nobodies. He will not share his belongings with such worthless men (insult).
 - c. The Bible often tells us that we shall be recognized by our fruit. What is your speech like, beloved? The things you say and how you say them are an open window to the state of your heart.
 - i. **Isaiah 32:6** For the fool speaks folly, and his heart is busy with iniquity, to practice ungodliness, to utter error concerning the LORD, to leave the craving of the hungry unsatisfied, and to deprive the thirsty of drink.
5. Verses 12-13: David's Anger: So David's young men turned away and came back and told him all this. (13) And David said to his men, "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, while two hundred remained with the baggage.
- a. Upon hearing the report of Nabal's refusal and harshness, David is immediately consumed with anger. Those same thoughts that often flood our minds must have flooded his:
 - i. How dare Nabal treat *me* in this matter? Doesn't Nabal know who *I* am? Doesn't he know that one day *I* will be king? Such insolence cannot be tolerated!
 - ii. **Commentary**: At this point, we are apt to think that Nabal now has a huge problem. But, of course, the Bible teaches us that we are wrong. David is the one with the problem, and he does not even know. David has been wronged!
 - b. Beloved, we are not responsible for someone else's sin, but we are responsible for how we react to it.
 - i. The Bible teaches us in **James 1:14** But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.
 - ii. David's desire for respect, unreceived from Saul, lures David away from trusting in God in the matter of Nabal.

6. Verse 14-17: The Unknown servant of the Lord: 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."

- a. We are now introduced to an unknown servant of God's providence.
 - i. He is a minor character of major significance; his role is small but essential.
 - ii. This is the man that sees and understands Nabal's foolishness. Led by God's Spirit, he can perceive that Nabal's words will have dire consequences. Moved by this reality, he seeks to intercede and save his fellow servants and himself from the coming wrath.
 - iii. Can there be any doubt that God placed this man in the right place and time? Can there be any doubt that God the Holy Spirit moved him to run to Abigail? This man is not only protecting his household but unknowingly, and by God's decree, he is protecting David from making a terrible mistake.
 1. God places his often unknown servants where they are needed for His glorious plan to march forward.
 - a. The little girl and Naaman in 2 Kings 5
 - b. Paul's nephew in Acts 23.
 - iv. Marvel, beloved, at how the God of kindness and wisdom leaves no detail untended in His work of delivering His people.

7. Verses 18-31: God's restraining power, the work of the Holy Spirit: 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. (21) Now David had said, "Surely in vain have I guarded all that this fellow has in the wilderness,

so that nothing was missed of all that belonged to him, and he has returned me evil for good. (22) God do so to the enemies of David and more also, if by morning I leave so much as one male of all who belong to him.” (23) 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. (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. (26) 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. (29) 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.”

- a. Our passage teaches us that David is in danger of becoming just like Saul.
 - i. Having spared the sinful king, he now seeks to avenge his honor from the slight of a foolish and worthless man. He is on his way to kill his enemy, Nabal. Does this not sound familiar?
 - ii. In chapter 24, David is the restrainer of his men, but in Chapter 25, David must be restrained.
 - iii. In chapter 24, David refuses to spill the king's blood, but here he is willing to kill Nabal and all that belonged to him. We get a glimpse of Saul in the city of Nob.
 - iv. In chapter 24, David understands that he should not take personal vengeance, but in this chapter, he is consumed by personal revenge.

- v. In chapter 24, David is wise, but in this chapter, he is no better than Nabal (foolish) or Saul (bloodthirsty).
 - b. However, one thing becomes clear for us. We know that God loves His people. This is the overriding truth in 1 Samuel. The focus of this chapter is that God the Holy Spirit restrains his chosen elect from their impulsivity and sinfulness.
 - i. David confesses this truth in verse 34: **For as surely as the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, who has restrained me from hurting you.**
 - ii. But how does God restrain his people from committing terrible errors? He restrains us through the ministry of the Holy Spirit! In our passage, God the Holy Spirit speaks audibly through the actions and words of His servant, Abigail.
 - c. Abigail is representative of the wisdom and work of God the Holy Spirit:
 - i. 23: The Holy Spirit is humble. Abigail as she bows before an angry David.
 - ii. 24: The Holy Spirit teaches us to love. Notice how Abigail assumes the guilt for her husband's actions. Truly love does cover a multitude of sins.
 - iii. 25: The Holy Spirit speaks the truth. Abigail admits that her husband is a fool.
 - iv. 26: The Holy Spirit restrains David with the Word. Abigail reminds David that the Lord **had restrained him from bloodguilt** up to this point. Why would David now take action into his own hands?
 - 1. David does not need to avenge himself; God will deal with Nabal. God deals with His enemies for the elect's sake.
 - v. 28: The Holy Spirit does not only restrain David, but He also reassures David of the veracity of His promises.
 - vi. 29: The Holy Spirit protects His people, and they have life in him, while the enemy only has death as a guarantee.
 - vii. 30-31: The Holy Spirit purifies. When you are king, there will be no reason for you to feel guilt.
8. Verses 32-35: David rightly repents: 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.”

- a. The conviction of the Holy Spirit has a profound and wonderful effect upon the heart of an erring Christian. Upon hearing the words of the Holy Spirit, David openly repents and breaks forth in doxological praise.
 - i. David blesses God, who sent Abigail. Beloved, God sends people that are filled with His Spirit into our lives, but He has also given us His Spirit to guide us.
 1. **John 16:8** And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment:
 - b. We must remember that the Holy Spirit is the third person of the trinity and therefore is omniscient. There is nothing that He does not know.
 - i. **1 Corinthians 2:10-11** these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. (11) For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.
 - c. It is essential that, like David, we respond rightly to the Holy Spirit's restraining providence.
 - i. **Ephesians 4:30** And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.
9. Verses 36-39A: Vengeance belongs to the Lord: 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. (39) 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.”

- a. It is important to note that Abigail would not speak to her husband while he was drunk. That would be unfruitful. Abigail waits until the morning.
- b. When she finally shares with Nabal, our narrative records that Nabal’s heart stops. He has a massive heart attack and the results are that he is paralyzed for 10 days. After 10 days, Nabal dies. We read that **the LORD struck Nabal**.
 - i. Beloved, note with what ease God can deliver the righteous!
 1. How unnecessary was David’s anger?
 2. How unnecessary was David’s thirst for revenge? His sensibility had been bruised but does not God take note of every slight to His saints? Is not every slight to His saints a slight against His Holy majesty? Will the wicked go unpunished?
 3. God is our deliverer! **Romans 12:19** Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.”

10. Verses 39B-44: God’s rewarding of the saints: 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.

- a. Her husband dead, Abigail was free from his foolishness. Our Lord rewards both her and David. Abigail becomes the wife of the future king, the man that has respected her and her counsel. David receives Abigail, a woman filled with Holy Spirit and whose counsel was precious.
- b. The wicked perish but the Saints of the Lord endure forever!

11. Benediction:

- a. **Psalms 19:13** Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me! Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression.

Public Reading of Scripture
Psalms 19:7-14