

FIRST SAMUEL

Chapter 25

The Death of Samuel

Now Samuel died. And all Israel assembled and mourned for him, and they buried him in his house at Ramah.

25:1 *Samuel died.* Earlier, perhaps 1031 BC. With Samuel's death is lost this trusted mouthpiece of the Lord and the last living link with the age of the judges. (CSB)

all Israel ... mourned for him. Samuel was recognized as a leader of national prominence who played a key role in the restructuring of the theocracy with the establishment of the monarchy (see chs. 8–12). The loss of his leadership was mourned much like that of other prominent figures in Israel's past history, including Jacob (Ge 50:10), Aaron (Nu 20:29) and Moses (Dt 34:8). (CSB)

The universal mourning shows their great respect for Samuel. (TLSB)

Ramah. Just north of Nob, it was the base for Samuel's whole ministry. (TLSB)

Paran. Desert area extending far south into the Sinai Peninsula, where Israel had encamped after leaving Mount Sinai. (TLSB)

David and Abigail

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. 4 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. 10 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?" 12 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.

14 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.” 18 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.” 32 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.” 36 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.” 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. 43 David also took Ahinoam of Jezreel, and both of them became his wives. 44 Saul had given Michal his daughter, David's wife, to Palti the son of Laish, who was of Gallim.

25:2–44 Nabal, the “fool” (see v. 25), lived near Carmel, where Saul had erected a monument in his own honor (see 15:12) and had committed the act that led to his rejection (see 15:26). The account of Nabal effectively serves the author’s purpose in a number of ways: 1. Nabal’s general character, his disdainful attitude toward David though David had guarded his flocks, and his sudden death at the Lord’s hand all parallel Saul (whose “flock” David had also protected). This allows the author indirectly to characterize Saul as a fool (see 13:13; 26:21) and to foreshadow his end. 2. David’s vengeful attitude toward Nabal displays his natural tendency and highlights his restraint toward Saul, the Lord’s anointed (this event is sandwiched between the two instances in which David spared Saul in spite of the urging of his men). 3. Abigail’s prudent action prevents David from using his power as leader for personal vengeance (the very thing Saul was doing). In this way the Lord (who avenged his servant) keeps David’s sword clean, teaching him a lesson he does not forget. 4. Abigail’s confident acknowledgment of David’s future accession to the throne foreshadows that event and even anticipates the Lord’s commitment to establish David’s house as a “lasting dynasty” (v. 28; cf. 2Sa 7:11–16). 5. Abigail’s marriage to David provides him with a wise and worthy wife, while Saul gives away David’s wife Michal to another, illustrating how the Lord counters every move Saul makes against David. (CSB)

Maon ... Carmel. Neighboring towns c 7 or 8 mi S of Hebron and Ziph. (TLSB)

very rich. The man’s wealth is introduced before his name. (TLSB)

25:3 *Nabal.* Lit, “fool.” His name and behavior suggest that our Lord may have alluded to him in the parable of the rich fool (Lk 12:16–21). (TLSB)

badly behaved. Coarse and boorish; introduction explains that such conduct is in character. Mel: “Hypocrites ... profess the truth and are not polluted by worship of idols, yet in their heart are without fear of God, without faith, and they love their pleasures or their treasures more than they love God” (Chem, *LTh* 2:367).(TLSB)

Calebite. A descendant of Caleb (see Nu 14:24), who settled at Hebron (see Jos 14:13) after the conquest of Canaan. Since Caleb’s name can mean “dog,” Nabal is subtly depicted as a dog as well as a fool. He would soon be a dead dog (see note on 2Sa 9:8), when the Lord would avenge his acts of contempt toward David. The hint is strong that, when the Lord avenges Saul’s sins against David (see 24:12, 15), the king will no longer pursue a dead dog (see 24:14) but will himself become one—a case of biting irony. (CSB)

Descendant of Caleb, who was promised territory in this region because of his faithful services in espionage (Nu 14:24). (TLSB)

25:4 *shearing sheep.* David’s men had kept company with the shepherds (cf v 7), who now return with the sheep to their master, Nabal. (TLSB)

25:5 *in my name.* With David’s authority, as emissaries. (TLSB)

25:6–8 Men are told to show meticulous etiquette in their greeting. (TLSB)

25:7 Both the person and property of the shepherds had been unmolested while they had been at the mercy of David’s militia. This was a testimony to David’s goodwill toward them and so, by extension, toward Nabal. (TLSB)

25:8 *favor.* Warranted, but David does not take it for granted. (TLSB)

a feast day. Sheepshearing was an occasion for feasting, but this may refer to a different celebration. (TLSB)

son. Marks David's deference to Nabal. Saul used the same term with respect to David in 24:16. (TLSB)

whatever you have at hand. David and his men ask for some remuneration for their protection of Nabal's shepherds and flocks against pillage (see vv. 15–16, 21). (CSB)

25:9 *they waited.* Implies that Nabal's response is a considered one. (TLSB)

25:10 *the son of Jesse?* Saul also dismissively referred to David this way in his most aggressive mood (22:13). Nabal is again identified with the foolish king. He may deny David's request out of fear of Saul. After all, one of the accusations leveled at Ahimelech was that he had given David bread (22:13). (TLSB)

25:11 *I do not know where?* Perhaps refers to dubious background of David's companions. (TLSB)

25:12 As emissaries, they did not respond to Nabal but reported back to David. (TLSB)

25:13 Size of David's company has not changed since ch 23, and two-thirds of them are now mobilized against Nabal. Action appears to be impulsive, and it serves no obvious purpose to fight against a fool. (TLSB)

25:14 *young men.* One of Nabal's own men made a principled act of rebellion in going to Abigail. Perhaps he had experienced David's kindness (v 15) or feared David's angry response. (TLSB)

25:15–16 Shepherds worked under protection of David's band. (TLSB)

25:16 *They were a wall.* Metaphor drawn from the importance of the fortifying wall in protecting a city or an enclosure for the flock. (TLSB)

25:17 *a worthless man.* Harsh words for a servant to say to his master's wife. (TLSB)

worthless. Implies godlessness (cf 2:12, the sons of Eli, and 10:26–27, those whose hearts were not touched by God). (TLSB)

one can not speak to him. In this way, too, Nabal is like Saul (cf., e.g., 20:27–33). (CSB)

25:18 *made haste.* Abigail appreciated the urgency of the situation, mirroring David's hasty action in v 13. (TLSB)

25:19 *did not tell her husband.* Cf. Michal's treatment of Saul (19:11–14). (CSB)

Obviously, Nabal would have foolishly prevented the intervention that was his best hope of survival. (TLSB)

25:20 *met them.* Apparently just in time, for David's men were mobilized. (TLSB)

25:21 *in vain.* In a more reflective mood, David might have recognized the value of the kindly action for its own sake. Here he is frustrated and angry. (TLSB)

25:22 *God do so to the enemies of David.* David invokes a curse on himself if he should fail to kill every male in Nabal's household and so obliterate Nabal's family. (CSB)

David's curse is immoderate. If the LXX preserves the original wording, he is calling a curse on himself if he fails to avenge Nabal's folly. Later (v 38), God's vengeance is seen, but only against David's enemy. (TLSB)

25:23 Indicates either recognition of David's kingly status or, more likely, a penitential demeanor as she accepts the blame for Nabal's folly. (TLSB)

25:24 *On me alone.* Abigail confesses the guilt as her own, as the only basis on which she can plead for restraint. (TLSB)

your servant. Expresses loyalty to David, not to Nabal. (TLSB)

25:25 *worthless fellow.* Abigail repeats the servant's assessment of him in v 17. (TLSB)

as his name. In ancient times a person's name was believed to reflect his nature and character. (CSB)

his name is Fool. In Hebrew the name Nabal means "fool." (CSB)

I ... did not see. Abigail accepts the guilt, though the fault is not hers. (TLSB)

25:26 *the LORD has restrained you.* Abigail is God's instrument in bringing it about. (TLSB)

bloodguilt. From taking matters into one's own hands and spilling blood without justification. David had restrained himself from such action against Saul (24:4). Abigail boldly anticipates David's response (v 33). (TLSB)

25:27 *my lord.* Abigail anticipates David's position as her husband and king. (TLSB)

25:28 *forgive the trespass.* Having accepted Nabal's guilt (v 24), Abigail pleads for forgiveness. The Christian might think of Christ's willingness to do this for the world (2Co 5:21; Heb 7:25). (TLSB)

the LORD will certainly make my lord a sure house. While the idea that David was destined to become king in place of Saul may have spread among the general populace, Abigail's assessment of David contrasts sharply with that of her husband (see v. 10). (CSB)

he fights the LORD's battles. Abigail is familiar with David's victories over the Philistines, in which he sought to glorify the Lord rather than advance his own honor (see 17:26, 45–47; 18:16–17). (CSB)

evil shall not be found in you. Abigail shows concern for the preservation of David's integrity in view of the office he was later to assume (see vv. 30–31, 39). (CSB)

25:29 *bound securely in the bundle of the living.* Using the figure of placing a valuable possession in a carefully wrapped package for safekeeping, Abigail assures David that the Lord will preserve his life in the midst of danger. (CSB)

Lit, "pouch" or "bag." As a person puts a coin or gem into a purse for safekeeping, so the Lord is careful to keep His own among "the living." (TLSB)

sling out. He summarily dismisses them. (TLSB)

25:30 *his appointed.* As Samuel, Jonathan, and Saul have done, Abigail acknowledges David's future rule. (TLSB)

25:31 *shed blood.* Abigail seeks to spare David's conscience, and for this she hopes to be remembered in the future, as David had expected Nabal to remember his kindness. (TLSB)

25:32 *who has sent you.* David recognizes the providential leading of the Lord in his encounter with Abigail (see v. 39). (CSB)

Abigail was the tool of the God of Israel. (TLSB)

25:33 David accepts Abigail's case entirely. (TLSB)

25:34 *unless you had hurried.* Abigail had been right to act and to act quickly. (TLSB)

25:35 *received.* He accepted the gift as the gesture of peace it was intended to convey. (TLSB)

obeyed. Remarkable, until we remember that he heard God's message in Abigail's voice (v 32). (TLSB)

25:36 *drunk.* Perhaps the cause of his foolishness. (TLSB)

feast of a king. Another clue that the author is using Nabal as a subtle portrayal of Saul. (CSB)

25:37 *became like a stone.* Perhaps he suffered a stroke—he who was without moral sensitivity became as senseless as a stone. (CSB)

He died of pure shock. Cf Ezk 36:26, which suggests that this speaks also of Nabal's spiritual death. Greg: "To a mind that is drunk with fury every right thing that is said appears wrong. Whence to Nabal when he was drunk Abigail laudably kept silence about his fault, but, when he had digested his wine, [she] as laudably told him of [his fault].... He could for this reason perceive the evil he had done, that he did not hear of it when drunk" (*NPNF* 2 12:40). (TLSB)

25:38 *the LORD struck.* Abigail was not the real cause of Nabal's judgment. She only delivered the message. (TLSB)

25:39 No period of mourning is mentioned. As a worthless man, perhaps Nabal's death did not warrant it. (TLSB)

take her as his wife. David was already married to Michal, and there would be further wives (1Ch 3:1–9). These are later described as gifts of God (2Sm 12:8). Monogamy had not yet become the norm, at least not for royalty. (TLSB)

25:40 *David has sent.* He did not go in person as he had not personally made overtures to her late husband. (TLSB)

25:41 *wash the feet.* Showing great humility (cf Jn 13:5–16); gesture of hospitality and welcome. (TLSB)

25:42 *five young women attended her.* Ladies in waiting, personally serving this wealthy woman. (TLSB)

25:43 *Ahinoam.* David's first wife (see 27:3; 30:5; 2Sa 2:2) and mother of his first son, Amnon (see 2Sa 3:2). (CSB)

Jezreel. Located near Carmel (see v. 2; Jos 15:55) and not to be confused with the northern town of the same name, where Israel camped against the Philistines (see 29:1, 11) and where Ahab resided in later times (see 1Ki 18:45–46). (CSB)

25:44 *Michal, David's wife*. Saul's action amounted to a divorce. (TLSB)

Palti. Mentioned as Paltiel in 2Sm 3:15. (TLSB)

Gallim. Town just north of Jerusalem. (TLSB)

Ch 25 Abigail intervenes between David and Nabal, rescuing both from their anger. Angry decisions lead to self-destruction. God calls us to listen to the voice of reason and peace. His wisdom and peace, expressed in the godly counsel of His servants, will guide your heart in the way of life. • Father, give us grace to be like a prudent one who acts with knowledge, and not like a fool who flaunts his folly (Pr 13:16). Amen. (TLSB)