

## THE ANSWER TO ANGER

Today's lesson reminds of us of a very important dynamic in the Christian life. Stated simply, while God's mercies are new every morning, so are Satan's attacks on us and his strategy is to use yesterday's victories as the basis for today's temptations! So that the sin we shunned yesterday, we may embrace today! That is what the man after God's own heart, David, future king of Israel, discovered about himself. Earlier, David had been presented with a golden opportunity to rid himself of his enemy, King Saul, while he slept in a cave occupied by David and his men. All of David's men told him to kill Saul while he slept. He certainly deserved it, and what an opportunity to let the spirit of revenge rule the moment for the way Saul had wrecked his life. But David refused to hurt Saul. He was truly led of the Holy Spirit in that moment and gained a great victory over sin. But let us not assume that, having a victory, we are now immune from facing the same temptation again.

This is Satan's daily strategy against us. He provokes us to sin in the area of recent victory over temptation. This is why scripture warns us, "he who thinks he stands, beware lest you fall." It is also why Galatians 6 warns us that when helping someone else out of sin, to do so with humility so that we don't fall. It's Satan's plan to neutralize us with sin opposing the Holy Spirit's desire for us by making us an unfit vessel for God's use. This was the lesson David learned and that we need to learn as well. The lesson is to realize that the spiritual strength God gave us yesterday is not enough for today. The grace you have already received will not enable you to stand right now. We have to learn that the Christian life is a succession of holy moments in which we count on His grace and strength to see us through. David was taught this lesson in chapter 25. And what a story line this is because what we have here is a story as up-to-date as tomorrow's headline! It is all about a broken employer/employee relationship that throws the employee into an insane rage, causing him to load every gun he has and roar back to the jobsite in an uncontrollable rage to shoot everyone he sees.

*Then Samuel died; and all Israel gathered together and mourned for him, and buried him at his house in Ramah. And David arose and went down to the wilderness of Paran. Now there was a man in Maon whose business was in Carmel; and the man was very rich, and he had three thousand sheep and a thousand goats. And it came about while he was shearing his sheep in Carmel (now the man's name was Nabal, and his wife's name was Abigail. And the woman was intelligent and beautiful in appearance, but the man was harsh and evil in his dealings, and he was a Calebite), that David heard in the wilderness that Nabal was shearing his sheep. So David sent ten young men; and David said to the young men, "Go up to Carmel, visit Nabal and greet him in my name; and thus you shall say, 'Have a long life, peace be to you, and peace be to your house, and peace be to all that you have. Now I have heard that you have shearers; now your shepherds have been with us and we have not insulted them, nor have they missed anything all the days they were in Carmel. Ask your young men and they will tell you. Therefore let my young men find favor in your eyes, for we have come on a festive day. Please give whatever you find at hand to your servants and to your son David.'" (1 Samuel 25:1-8)*

Here is the background to our story: after Samuel's death, David took this motley crew of 600 misfits into the southern wilderness, where David turned them into a band of guerilla-like fighters. He made it his mission to roam that area, keeping his men on 24-hour guard duty protecting the scattered Jewish clans of shepherds against the surprise plundering raids that the wild tribes of the desert would engage in. So his men became Israel's unofficial army in their unofficial war. While Saul, Israel's official leader, was leading the army into battle against the Philistines, their national enemy, David was protecting the nation's back side against plunder. And it was a common custom—much like our present-day practice of tipping waitresses—that when the sheep were sheared, the owner of the flock would pay a portion of his profit to those who had protected his shepherds. It wasn't a law or legal responsibility to do it, just like tipping today is strictly voluntary. But when David heard that one of the wealthiest of the owners was shearing his sheep, which meant Nabal was coming into his annual payday, David thought he only right to seek his tip—wages for he and men. He had no specific amount in mind, but whatever the owner thought was fair based on the level of service David's men provided. In a normal situation there would have been no problem. But this was not a normal situation. Nabal was one of those nasty people who shock us with their overbearing, demanding, deceptive dishonesty.

*When David's young men came, they spoke to Nabal according to all these words in David's name; then they waited. But Nabal answered David's servants and said, "Who is David? And who is the son of Jesse? There are many servants today who are each breaking away from his master. Shall I then take my bread and my water and my meat that I have slaughtered for my shearers, and give it to men whose origin I do not know?" So David's young men retraced their way and went back; and they came and told him according to all these words. David said to his men, "Each of you gird on his sword." So each man girded on his sword. And David also girded on his sword, and about four hundred men went up behind David while two hundred stayed with the baggage. But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, saying, "Behold, David sent messengers from the wilderness to greet our master, and he scorned them. Yet the men were very good to us, and we were not insulted, nor did we miss anything as long as we went about with them, while we were in the fields. They were a wall to us both by night and by day, all the time we were with them tending the sheep. Now therefore, know and consider what you should do, for evil is plotted against our master and against all his household; and he is such a worthless man that no one can speak to him."*  
(1 Samuel 25:9-17)

It is easy to see why his servants hated Nabal, calling him the worthless son of Belial—a guy who wouldn't listen to anyone and who was always right. We will learn that his own wife called him a fool. In the Bible, that's a man who says there is no God. Nabal lived his life as if there were no God, no higher authority. So he wasn't humble or submissive to anyone. All of us have run across that kind of person—a selfish jerk who always justifies anything that want to say or do. This is how he treated David's request. David's kindness was repaid with haughty insult. David's help was unrecognized with selfish denial—I don't owe you guys anything. I have to keep my goods to provide for my servants, which was lie because that kind of man mistreated and underpaid everyone, especially his own men. Nabal refused to pay because he was selfish. Then, to justify his refusal to honor his obligation to David, he twisted the knife in David just for spite I think, as he misrepresented David's character with a false accusation. David was a criminal, a lowlife, a deadbeat that couldn't keep the job he had, so he ran away from his responsibilities. It wouldn't be right to take my hard-earned money and support his den of thieves.

As we read this ancient story, it's obvious that life and people haven't changed much in 3000 years. We still can cross paths with a modern-day Nabal all the time. To one degree or another, we have had our kindness repaid with coldness, and our help, maybe even sacrifice, gone unrecognized by people who are takers and users. Sometimes such people add insult to injury when our best effort is twisted and distorted by their sinful minds. So we are accused of wrongdoing with impure motives. What do you do when Nabal appears in your life? We all face this threat of seizing the moment and extracting our own pound of flesh to get even! David did. Satan blinded him with anger over this incident and he only heard it secondhand. Notice what David did when faced with anger's powerful dynamic. Anger blinds us to Satan's scheme against us. You see, when you are angry, you are the closest to being like Satan, who is a liar and murderer, than you are at any other time in your life. In such times, we easily murder others with our thoughts and words that lie to ourselves the whole time as we justify the rightness of our action, just like Satan does. Under the influence of anger, revenge is the strongest narcotic in the human experience!

*Now David had said, "Surely in vain I have guarded all that this man has in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that belonged to him; and he has returned me evil for good. May God do so to the enemies of David, and more also, if by morning I leave as much as one male of any who belong to him." (1 Samuel 25:21-22)*

In his anger, David ignored God's direction. He didn't stop to pray about it or ask his priest, Abithar, for advice. All he was thinking was Nabal can't treat me that way and I am going to get even! David also sought exaggerated revenge. Nabal, you think you can hurt me once, I'm going to kill you 400 times. I'm bringing my army with me. You think I'm a nobody? Well we'll see what you think now! David is seeking exaggerated revenge. Have you ever been guilty of this, going overboard on retribution? Our human problem is SIN causes us to twist the standards of justice. In the process of that, David justified gross evil. David is talking to himself, justifying his actions, just like we can do. He is preparing to massacre innocent people in cold blood! That would have made him no better than evil Doeg, who killed the priests. Let us not forget what anger—unexamined rage—is capable of doing and justifying in the name of revenge.

Now this story has a happy ending because of a wise, beautiful woman named Abigail, Nabal's wife, who probably ended up with Nabal through an arranged marriage with parents who set her up because he had

money for a large dowry. What we see on her part is an incredible display of God's wisdom in action as she effectively defuses the power of evil.

*Then Abigail hurried and took two hundred loaves of bread and two jugs of wine and five sheep already prepared and five measures of roasted grain and a hundred clusters of raisins and two hundred cakes of figs, and loaded them on donkeys. She said to her young men, "Go on before me; behold, I am coming after you." But she did not tell her husband Nabal. It came about as she was riding on her donkey and coming down by the hidden part of the mountain, that behold, David and his men were coming down toward her; so she met them. When Abigail saw David, she hurried and dismounted from her donkey, and fell on her face before David and bowed herself to the ground. She fell at his feet and said, "On me alone, my lord, be the blame. And please let your maidservant speak to you, and listen to the words of your maidservant. Please do not let my lord pay attention to this worthless man, Nabal, for as his name is, so is he. Nabal is his name and folly is with him; but I your maidservant did not see the young men of my lord whom you sent." (1 Samuel 25:18-25)*

First, Abigail covered up Nabal's past sin by humbly rewarding. She gave him a generous tip of goodness, doing it with a contrite spirit and gentle demeanor. She didn't fight fire with more fire. No, she put out the fire with the water of humility and brokenness. And as she did so, **she honestly recognized the injustice** David suffered. David, you have a right to be angry and hurt because my husband sinned against you. I know that and I am sorry. Please forgive me for what he did and for the shame and hurt you must feel. So, peace makers must first deal with past sin!

*"Now therefore, my lord, as the Lord lives, and as your soul lives, since the Lord has restrained you from shedding blood, and from avenging yourself by your own hand, now then let your enemies and those who seek evil against my lord, be as Nabal. Now let this gift which your maidservant has brought to my lord be given to the young men who accompany my lord. Please forgive the transgression of your maidservant; for the Lord will certainly make for my lord an enduring house, because my lord is fighting the battles of the Lord, and evil will not be found in you all your days. Should anyone rise up to pursue you and to seek your life, then the life of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of the living with the Lord your God; but the lives of your enemies He will sling out as from the hollow of a sling." (1 Samuel 25:26-29)*

After recognizing the injustice suffered, Abigail approached David's present responsibility by genuinely appreciating his restraint. **She wisely asks for reconsideration!** She thanks God that God has kept David from passing her by to do evil. She admits that her husband has acted very foolishly, but is not worth David's concern. Don't take it personally, David, he treats everyone the same. Don't stoop to his level. His words hurt you, I know, but consider the source, the words of a fool. Leave him to God's justice! She continues without stopping because she knows that he is listening to her. She sees the wheels of David's mind turning, knowing that for him, these are words of life! They are renewing David's life before her eyes. The power of evil and Satan's grip on David's thought is being broken. The lies that were being whispered into David's mind that so inflamed his rage are suddenly being weighed and evaluated by this man of God. So Abigail presses on.

*"And when the Lord does for my lord according to all the good that He has spoken concerning you, and appoints you ruler over Israel, this will not cause grief or a troubled heart to my lord, both by having shed blood without cause and by my lord having avenged himself. When the Lord deals well with my lord then remember your maidservant." (1 Samuel 25:30-31)*

Abigail looked to God's future blessing of David by confidently reassuring David of success. David, God has anointed you, protected you and will promote you, keeping His promise to be king. When that happens are you going to want to look back and have this on your record to explain and live with? Her last step in defusing his anger is to make a **godly request to safeguard his integrity.**

Abigail defused David's anger by covering all the bases: past sin, present responsibility, and future blessing! The power of words of life should never be underestimated, even when facing a madman, insane with rage and revenge!

*Then David said to Abigail, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me, and blessed be your discernment, and blessed be you, who have kept me this day from bloodshed and from avenging myself by my*

*own hand. Nevertheless, as the Lord God of Israel lives, who has restrained me from harming you, unless you had come quickly to meet me, surely there would not have been left to Nabal until the morning light as much as one male." So David received from her hand what she had brought him and said to her, "Go up to your house in peace. See, I have listened to you and granted your request." (1 Samuel 25:32-35)*

Blessed are the peace makers and blessed are those who listen to them, and turn from their angry ways! Use these principles of wisdom and, like Abigail, be a peace maker. Speak words of life and witness the power of God's healing!

**Point to Ponder:** While God's mercies are new every morning, so are Satan's attacks on us and his strategy is to use yesterday's victories as the basis for today's temptations!

**Question to Answer:** Does anger over injustice trigger responses of revenge for you?

Thanks for your intercession in this vital ministry!  
Pastor Dave