



Studies in the Life of David

Text

First Samuel 25:2-13

Topic

Nabal, whose name translates to *fool*, picks a fight with David, his future king

Title

“Everybody was King, Fool Fighting”

Introduction

You gotta love the Incredible Hulk. You remember the story from the comics. Dr. Bruce Banner is exposed to gamma radiation. From that point forward whenever anything gets Banner angry he transforms into a giant, raging humanoid monster capable of feats of strength in proportion to his anger. As Hulk puts it, “The madder Hulk gets, the stronger Hulk gets.”

Long before the Incredible Hulk there was David, the future king of Israel. We’ve seen his Bruce Banner side in his dealings with King Saul. Even though Saul was hunting him down trying to murder him, David showed mercy to Saul by refusing to harm him when he had ample opportunity.

But when a defenseless farmer named Nabal refuses to share the fruits of the harvest with David, he tells four hundred of his men to gird on their swords. He vows to kill Nabal and all the innocent males in his household.

David will be stopped and come to his senses by the intervention of Nabal’s wise wife, Abigail. But before he is we want to explore the interaction between David and Nabal and remind ourselves that, even as Christians,

there's a problem within us. We, too 'Hulk-out' in various circumstances. It's not the enemy *without* that we need to be fighting so much as it is the enemy *within*.

I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 Your Fight Is Not With The Fool Without Who Ignores God On His Way To Hell, but #2 Your Fight Is With The Fool Within Who Acts Independently Of God On Your Way To Heaven.

#1 Your Fight Is Not With The Fool Without
Who Ignores God On His Way To Hell
(v2-11 & 36-38)

If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, you know that there is a struggle going on within you. The apostle Paul put it like this.

Romans 7:18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.

Romans 7:19 For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.

Theologians engage in an ongoing, endless debate over exactly what's going on in your body:

- Some say that you only have one nature after getting saved, the new, divine nature that is implanted within you. They say the old sin nature is destroyed when you receive Christ as your Savior and what remains is an indwelling principle and propensity to sin called "the flesh."
- Others say that the old sin nature remains within you and the struggle is between it and the new nature.

I sometimes refer to it as "the flesh," other times as "the old nature" or "sin nature." While we will continue to debate the proper terms, every Christian understands this fight on a gut level. **We sometimes sin by doing the things we do not want to do and we sometimes sin by not doing the things we want to do.**

The import of this episode in David's life is to show us just how dangerous is the enemy within. Perhaps that's why we first get a good look at Nabal. He represents the natural man, the man devoid of the Spirit of God. Nabal is who David was, who we all are, apart from a relationship with God. He's the man with only one nature, the old sin nature, dominated by his flesh. It's an ugly thing!

1 Samuel 25:2 Now there was a man in Maon whose business was in Carmel, and the man was very rich. He had three thousand sheep and a thousand goats. And he was shearing his sheep in Carmel.

1 Samuel 25:3 The name of the man was Nabal, and the name of his wife Abigail. And she was a woman of good understanding and beautiful appearance; but the man was harsh and evil in his doings. He was of the house of Caleb.

Nabal had it all:

- He had multiple land holdings, living in Maon while doing business in Carmel.
- He was not just rich, he was "very rich."
- He had heritage. He "was of the house of Caleb," one of the truly great spiritual heroes in Israel's history.
- Nabal was also "harsh and evil in his doings." We would say he was a shrewd business man.
- Nabal had a trophy wife he loved to put on display.

Aren't those things that the world treasures and values? If you were saved later in life, weren't you on a path to become a Nabal?

So we don't miss the spiritual point it just happens that this guy's name means *fool*. Now in the Bible a fool isn't someone who is mentally challenged. He is someone, according to Psalm 14:1 and 53:1, who has said in his heart, "There is no God." The actual phrase in the original Hebrew is simply, "No God," meaning this is a person who actively opposes God, who says "No" to God.

1 Samuel 25:4 When David heard in the wilderness that Nabal was shearing his sheep,
1 Samuel 25:5 David sent ten young men; and David said to the young men, "Go up to Carmel, go to Nabal, and greet him in my name.

1 Samuel 25:6 And thus you shall say to him who lives in prosperity: 'Peace be to you, peace to your house, and peace to all that you have!

1 Samuel 25:7 Now I have heard that you have shearers. Your shepherds were with us, and we did not hurt them, nor was there anything missing from them all the while they were in Carmel.

1 Samuel 25:8 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 comes to your hand to your servants and to your son David.' "

David wasn't seeking a hand-out. This was a polite way of collecting on a debt. There was an arrangement between Nabal's shepherds and David's army. David protected the shepherds out in the fields from Philistine raiding parties. At shearing time, when the crops were harvested, David expected payment for having protected Nabal's "prosperity."

It's not pertinent to our topic, but I wonder if Christians aren't protecting America's prosperity by our presence?

1 Samuel 25:9 So when David's young men came, they spoke to Nabal according to all these words in the name of David, and waited.

1 Samuel 25:10 Then Nabal answered David's servants, and said, "Who is David, and who is the son of Jesse? There are many servants nowadays who break away each one from his master.

1 Samuel 25:11 Shall I then take my bread and my water and my meat that I have killed for my shearers, and give it to men when I do not know where they are from?"

Every year, Charlie Brown wants to kick the football. Every year, Lucy pulls it away at the last minute. Then, one year, she executes a contract with Charlie Brown agreeing to let him kick the football. He's excited because he has a signed contract. Then, at the last minute, she pulls it away and he falls just like every year prior. "Funny thing about this signature," Lucy says. "It was never notarized."

Nabal was shrewd like that. He knew how to work the system. The agreement his shepherds had made was what we'd call a 'gentlemen's agreement.' It was all based on a handshake, as it were. Thus when it came time to pay, Nabal acted like he had no knowledge of it. Worse, he dissed David as a rebel and fugitive.

- On the one hand, Nabal might have been concerned that if he supplied David, Saul might hear of it and do to him what he'd done to the priests at Nob, where he ordered them and their families and their livestock slaughtered.
- On the other hand, he had undoubtedly heard of David's showing mercy to Saul. The best play for Nabal, then, the worldly play, was to renege on the promises his shepherds had made. It seemed a win-win for Nabal.

As we will see momentarily, it was setting up to be a massive 'lose-lose' for Nabal. David was going to Hulk-out and kill Nabal along with every male in his household!

Do you admire Nabal? The world does. He is the poster-boy for those who say "No God." Which is why we all need to take a look at how the Nabal's of the world end up.

In the intervening verses we will eventually see Nabal's wise wife, Abigail, act to honor her husband's commitment to David, thus sparing David from sinning and her household from bloodshed. All, however, was not well for Nabal.

1 Samuel 25:36 Now Abigail went to Nabal, and there 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; therefore she told him nothing, little or much, until morning light.

1 Samuel 25:37 So it was, in the morning, when the wine had gone from Nabal, and his wife had told him these things, that his heart died within him, and he became like a stone.

1 Samuel 25:38 Then it happened, after about ten days, that the Lord struck Nabal, and he died.

Nabal was at the top of the world. He was very rich and enjoying an unusual season of prosperity. He had just out-witted (so he thought) David, the man after God's own heart. He was feasting, and was "drunk" - enjoying all the carnal pleasures the world had to offer him. Seated with him was a beautiful woman, the envy of other men.

And then he had a stroke and after ten days of suffering he died.

What does it profit for you to gain the whole world only to lose your soul? If you are yet unsaved, **you** are Nabal. You are saying, “No” to God. Go ahead; gain the whole world! No one is stopping you. Until one day your empty heart dies within you and you become “like a stone” in your infirmity and you die and pass into eternity. What then?

#2 Your Fight Is With The Fool Within
Who Acts Independently Of God On Your Way To Heaven
(v12-13 & 21-22)

David had already shown remarkable spiritual restraint and control dealing with King Saul. He never engaged Saul in battle and when he had the opportunity to defeat Saul, he let him go for the sake of being spiritual, for the sake of obeying the Lord.

Now a farmer won't pay his debt and David snaps!

1 Samuel 25:12 So David's young men turned on their heels and went back; and they came and told him all these words.

1 Samuel 25:13 Then David said to his men, "Every man gird on his sword." So every man girded on his sword, and David also girded on his sword. And about four hundred men went with David, and two hundred stayed with the supplies.

Remember that Nabal and his men were defenseless. Was it really necessary to take “four hundred men?” It was even worse than that.

1 Samuel 25:21 Now David had said, "Surely in vain I have protected all that this fellow has in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that belongs to him. And he has repaid me evil for good.

1 Samuel 25:22 May God do so, and more also, to the enemies of David, if I leave one male of all who belong to him by morning light."

Really? Kill *every* “male” in Nabal’s household? It was an extreme reaction. It shows just how powerful the flesh, the old nature, can be.

David had been **wronged**. But he was **wrong** in his reaction. It was was carnal, it was fleshly, it was sinful.

What ought he to have done?

- Maybe nothing. In the New Testament, in First Corinthians, believers are encouraged to resolve their disputes privately or at least among other believers. If the disputes cannot be resolved, rather than letting them spill over into the world we are encouraged to be defrauded. Suffer the loss for the sake of the testimony of Jesus Christ.
- Maybe David did have a play. All he needed to do was let Nabal know that he was going to withdraw his army and no longer protect his shepherds. It might stun Nabal to his senses. After all, he was a shrewd business man. At worst David would suffer the loss of wages for a season, but God would provide for him.

This entire situation was designed by God as a test for David. He initially failed. With the help of Abigail, he would succeed and return to his spiritual self.

Mean time we see David seething. Recognize yourself? *Sure you do!* It is exactly what we look like when we give-in to the flesh and express the old nature. It is usually in a situation where we can justify our reaction. We've definitely been wronged. You may or may not want to actually kill the person; probably not. But you most certainly want what is fair, what is right, what is owed to you.

But we are wrong to react that way. Better, spiritually speaking, to be defrauded, to suffer the loss, to love our enemies and do good to them. Better to go on expressing our new, divine nature in the energy and empowering of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Your flesh, your sin nature - however you prefer to describe it - will never get any weaker. It is always there, waiting to rear its ugliness.

We have the promise of God that if we instead yield our members to obedience, we need not yield them to the flesh.

We're talking about the biblical doctrine of sanctification. The basic meaning of the verb *sanctify* (Greek *hagiazō*) is *to separate*, or *to set apart*. Sanctification, then, is that sovereign act of God whereby He sets apart a

person, a place, or an object for Himself in order that He might accomplish His purpose in the world by means of that person, place, or object.

Sanctification is not the improvement of the old nature, nor is it the eradication of that nature thereby rendering it impossible for a child of God to commit sin. Sanctification is not merely a single act, but a continuous process. The work of Sanctification in the believer involves victory over sin in your daily life.

We understand sanctification in terms of three stages:

1. First, there is the initial sanctification that occurs when you are saved. God sets you apart. This is sometimes called “positional sanctification.” It is the fact that you now belong to God and that He who began His good work in you will complete it.
2. Ultimately there is final sanctification that occurs when you are with the Lord. This is sometimes called “perfect sanctification,” or “glorification.” It occurs when you are no longer in your mortal body.
3. Between positional and perfect sanctification is “practical sanctification.” This is where we live everyday. It involves personal responsibility. It is a matter of choice on our part. As long as we are in these bodies, we are able to sin. But because of the indwelling Holy Spirit, and our new divine nature, we are also able to *not* sin depending on our choices.

For example, in First Thessalonians 4:3 we read,

1 Thessalonians 4:3 For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality;

In Hebrews 12:14,

Hebrews 12:14 Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord:

This practical sanctification is thus a process. As you read in Philippians 3:12 & 14, “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after... I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

How is this accomplished? Let me quickly give you five things to consider.

1. First, God's Word is the active agent the Holy Spirit uses to accomplish practical sanctification. The psalmist writes, "How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word."
2. Second, know and reckon on the fact you are dead to sin and to self. Romans 6:6 says, "Knowing this, that our old man [the flesh, the old nature] is crucified with [Christ]..."
3. Third, yield your body to God. First Corinthians 6:19-20 says, "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."
4. Fourth, surrender you will to God. Ephesians 5:17 says, "Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is."
5. Fifth, walk in the Spirit. Galatians 5:16 says, "I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh."

Nabal is who you were. David is who you are - **but which David?** That's up to you.

See in David just how quickly you can yield your members to sin. It doesn't matter how mature you are, or think you are. It doesn't matter how long you've been a believer. The flesh, the old sin nature, is ready to reveal itself. Sometimes it's the smaller things that incite it.

Guard your hearts. Be David at his best. Pity the Nabal's who are on their way to Hell.

You are on **your** way to Heaven.

1 John 3:2 Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.