



Studies in the Life of David

Text

First Samuel 25:14-44

Topic

On his way to slaughter Nabal and the men of his household
David encounters Abigail blocking the road

Title

"Abbey Road"

Introduction

Have you ever asked God to make you a servant? I'm sure you have. But just what kind of a servant did you have in mind?

The words "servants," "serve," and "service" occur well over a thousand times in the Bible. They describe everything from free, voluntary service that is more like employment to involuntary slavery and everything in-between.

The two most common New Testament words for servant are *doulos* and *diakonos*.

- *Doulos* is translated variously into English as *bond-servant*, *bond-slave*, *slave*, and *servant*. Those are all very different positions, with varying degrees of freedom. There's obviously a big difference between a slave and a servant.
- *Diakonos* is used of someone who executes the commands of another person. It was used, for example, to describe the servant of a king. It was used of a waiter who served food and drinks. That's probably why

the seven guys in the Book of Acts picked to distribute food to the widows were called *diakonos*, from which we get our word 'deacons.' It derives from an obsolete form of a word that means *to run errands*. Again we see that there can be a variety of meanings.

When you ask God, "make me a servant," are you saying that if you happen to be going a certain way anyway you'll run an errand for Him? Or do you mean you are a slave who is ready to do *anything* and *everything* you are told?

There's a godly woman in our chapter, Abigail, who gives us her understanding of what it meant to be the Lord's servant. In verse forty-one she describes herself by saying "Here is your maidservant, **a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord.**"

Being a servant of servants willing to wash the feet of other servants put Abigail in good company. It's exactly what Jesus demonstrated on the night before He was crucified when He took the place of the servant of servants by washing the disciple's feet.

In Abigail we can identify at least two things that compelled her to have the servant-heart of Jesus Christ centuries before He stooped to wash the feet of the disciples. Those same two things can, *they must*, compel **us** if we are to be servants in the truest biblical sense.

I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 The Lord's Compassion Compels You To Be A Servant Of Servants, and #2 The Lord's Coming Compels You To Be A Servant Of Servants.

#1 The Lord's Compassion Compels You To Be A Servant Of Servants

(v14-19)

We are in the middle of a story. It's summed-up pretty well as one of the young men in Abigail's household told her what was about to happen.

1 Samuel 25:14 Now one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, saying, "Look, David sent messengers from the wilderness to greet our master; and he reviled them.

1 Samuel 25:15 But the men were very good to us, and we were not hurt, nor did we miss anything as long as we accompanied them, when we were in the fields.

1 Samuel 25:16 They were a wall to us both by night and day, all the time we were with them keeping the sheep.

1 Samuel 25:17 Now therefore, know and consider what you will do, for harm is determined against our master and against all his household. For he is such a scoundrel that one cannot speak to him."

David's fugitive army of six hundred men had been protecting from Philistine raiders the shepherds and sheep of a wealthy farmer named Nabal. It was shearing time, harvest time, and David sent some men to collect food and supplies from Nabal as the agreed upon payment for their protection. Nabal refused to pay a dime, insulting David in the process. David flew into a rage and was on his way with four hundred armed men to kill Nabal and every male member in his household.

If you ask me, Nabal was getting what he deserved. It was unfortunate that others in his household were going to be killed along with him, but that's the way it was in those days.

Instead of letting things play-out, Abigail intervened. Taking matters into her own hands, Abigail put together a reasonable payment for David and his men.

1 Samuel 25:18 Then Abigail made haste and took two hundred loaves of bread, two skins of wine, five sheep already dressed, five seahs of roasted grain, one hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs, and loaded them on donkeys.

I think we see something of Abigail's motive in verse nineteen.

1 Samuel 25:19 And she said to her servants, "Go on before me; see, I am coming after you." But she did not tell her husband Nabal.

As big a fool as he was, Nabal did not deserve to be killed. Neither did the males in his household. To stop the slaughter, however, Abigail would need to put herself at risk at great personal cost. She'd have to stand in the road, blocking David's advance.

What was her motive? I see compassion moving her to do something to help her husband and his men. One biblical reason I'd call it compassion is because Abigail thought so much like Jesus long before the Lord came to earth. She saw herself as a servant to wash other servant's feet, and that's the heart of our Lord.

In his sermon on Christ's compassion Charles Spurgeon writes,

[Compassion] may be taken as a clue to the Savior's whole life... If you would sum up the whole character of Christ in reference to ourselves, it might be gathered into this one sentence, "He was moved with compassion."

Whether it was in eternity past, or when Jesus walked the earth, or now that He is seated in Heaven, His actions on behalf of the human race were motivated by compassion. We were all Nabal's, fools who said "No" to God. All the while we were busy living, destruction was coming down the road of life. We were slated to die in our trespasses and sins.

But while we were yet sinners and even rebels Jesus determined to put Himself at risk at enormous personal cost. To be that servant of servant's washing the feet of His disciples Jesus laid aside the rights to His deity, came to earth as a man, and humbled Himself as God's servant unto death - even the death of the Cross.

Do I have the compassion of the Christ? Can I serve someone like Nabal for the sake of Jesus Christ - doing it as unto the Lord? Well, I can if I am a believer because (by definition) I have the nature of Jesus Christ within me. But I need to settle in my heart that this is the kind of servant I am. I'm not just a voluntary servant, a person who might occasionally wait tables as an employee or run an errand if and when it's convenient. No, I'm a servant to servants, a foot-washer, waiting to be assigned my next task.

The feet I wash won't always be those of grateful, deserving individuals. But that's not why I'm washing them. I'm washing them because that's what Jesus would do - except He's not here and I am.

Abigail positioned herself in the road - a human roadblock.

#2 The Lord's Coming Compels You To Be A Servant Of Servants

(v20-35)

On a practical level, Abigail is going to appeal to David to relent from slaughtering Nabal and his household because it would be unbecoming of the character of Israel's future king.

On a spiritual level, she acts as a servant of the king whose coming has been promised and is certain but has been delayed. We can thus see ourselves as those who intercede for those who will otherwise be destroyed at His coming.

We don't want to press the typology too far. Unlike David, the Lord Jesus Christ is *not* coming in anger, with wrong motives. But He **is** coming to judge the living and the dead and His coming ought to compel us to serve others.

1 Samuel 25:20 So it was, as she rode on the donkey, that she went down under cover of the hill; and there were David and his men, coming down toward her, and she met them.

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."

Four hundred and one armed, angry men were coming bent on bloodshed. One unarmed woman blocked their approach. *It was nothing short of terrifying for Abigail.*

1 Samuel 25:23 Now when Abigail saw David, she dismounted quickly from the donkey, fell on her face before David, and bowed down to the ground.

Her immediate response was to submit to her future king. This speaks to our understanding of the kind of servant we are. Are we volunteers? Co-workers? Or are we immediately submitted to the will and ways of Jesus?

1 Samuel 25:24 So she fell at his feet and said: "On me, my lord, on me let this iniquity be! And please let your maidservant speak in your ears, and hear the words of your maidservant.

Abigail identified herself with the sin of Nabal. It's what Jesus did for us, is it not? In His case He Who knew no sin took our sin upon Himself on the Cross, paying its penalty and suffering its punishment.

The servant we want to be identifies with others, realizing that but for the grace of God, there we would be.

1 Samuel 25:25 Please, let not my lord regard this scoundrel 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.

This may seem disrespectful for a wife but it was the truth. Look at this in a broader context. When I think of others, I must see them as they truly are - sinners. It's not disrespectful, but necessary in order for them to receive the message of the Cross.

In verses twenty-six through thirty Abigail appeals to David's relationship to the Lord in order to call him back to his walk with the Lord.

1 Samuel 25:26 Now therefore, my lord, as the Lord lives and as your soul lives, since the Lord has held you back from coming to bloodshed and from avenging yourself with your own hand, now then, let your enemies and those who seek harm for my lord be as Nabal.

1 Samuel 25:27 And now this present which your maidservant has brought to my lord, let it be given to the young men who follow my lord.

1 Samuel 25:28 Please forgive the trespass of your maidservant. For the Lord will certainly make for my lord an enduring house, because my lord fights the battles of the Lord, and evil is not found in you throughout your days.

1 Samuel 25:29 Yet a man has risen to pursue you and seek your life, but the life of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of the living with the Lord your God; and the lives of your enemies He shall sling out, as from the pocket of a sling.

1 Samuel 25:30 And it shall come to pass, when the Lord has done for my lord according to all the good that He has spoken concerning you, and has appointed you ruler over Israel,

1 Samuel 25:31 that this will be no grief to you, nor offense of heart to my lord, either that you have shed blood without cause, or that my lord has avenged himself. But when the Lord has dealt well with my lord, then remember your maidservant."

Abigail reminded David that God had a plan for his life. He, too, was a servant, fighting the Lord's battles. The Lord had strengthened him thus far to do what was right and godly. He could strengthen him still and would if David relented from his flesh. After all, the kingdom would certainly be established and David rewarded.

God has a plan for your life. You're His servant. He has strengthened you and will go on strengthening you if you will yield to the Spirit rather than the flesh. The kingdom is coming and, at the resurrection and rapture of the church, you will be rewarded and established as a co-regent in it.

Back to the story. You're David. Are you going to listen to the pleadings of a woman? Be corrected by a woman?

You are if she's a godly woman and you are a godly man!

1 Samuel 25:32 Then David said to Abigail: "Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me!

1 Samuel 25:33 And blessed is your advice and blessed are you, because you have kept me this day from coming to bloodshed and from avenging myself with my own hand.

1 Samuel 25:34 For indeed, as the Lord God of Israel lives, who has kept me back from hurting you, unless you had hurried and come to meet me, surely by morning light no males would have been left to Nabal!"

1 Samuel 25:35 So David received from her hand what she had brought him, and said to her, "Go up in peace to your house. See, I have heeded your voice and respected your person."

David recognized God was correcting him.

Correction is a mostly lost ministry in the church. It's too bad, because it is a mark of true humility, of true servanthood, to receive godly correction.

The Lord is coming. His coming compels us to identify with sinners in the sense that we are not that far removed from being lost ourselves. We need to tell them the truth - that they are fools to say "No" to God when He is not willing they should perish but offers them eternal life. Those who are already following the Lord need to be encouraged to be strengthened for

the journey while we wait. If they fail or fall, we ought to correct them, gently but firmly.

There's an ending to this episode. We saw last time we were together, in verses thirty-six through thirty-eight, that when Nabal awoke from his drunken stupor and heard how he had almost been killed, he instead had a stroke and died within a few days.

1 Samuel 25:39 So when David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, "Blessed be the Lord, who has pleaded the cause of my reproach from the hand of Nabal, and has kept His servant from evil! For the Lord has returned the wickedness of Nabal on his own head." And David sent and proposed to Abigail, to take her as his wife.

We are not to take personal revenge upon a person. The Lord ultimately works those things out. Mean time the Lord gives the state the right and the responsibility to administer justice by bearing the sword.

1 Samuel 25:40 When the servants of David had come to Abigail at Carmel, they spoke to her saying, "David sent us to you, to ask you to become his wife."

1 Samuel 25:41 Then she arose, bowed her face to the earth, and said, "Here is your maidservant, a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord."

1 Samuel 25:42 So Abigail rose in haste and rode on a donkey, attended by five of her maidens; and she followed the messengers of David, and became his wife.

1 Samuel 25:43 David also took Ahinoam of Jezreel, and so both of them were his wives.

1 Samuel 25:44 But Saul had given Michal his daughter, David's wife, to Palti the son of Laish, who was from Gallim.

There seems to be a renewed interest in polygamy. There's a fictional cable TV show dedicated to it, and another reality show getting ready to air. God tolerated polygamy in the Old Testament but we see His intention for marriage in the Garden of Eden - one man, one woman, for life.

- The Genesis account, verified by Jesus in the New Testament, commands a man to leave father and mother and become one flesh with his **wife**, *not* wives.
- In Deuteronomy 17 God commanded kings to not multiply wives to themselves.
- In the New Testament, a qualification for spiritual leadership is that a man be the husband of **one** wife.

- In Ephesians 5, which discusses marriage at length, it refers to the husband and wife in singular terms.

David, the future king, took Abigail to be his bride. Jesus, the future King of kings, is your Bridegroom. When He returns to resurrect and rapture us it will be as a Bridegroom for His bride.

A bride makes herself ready for her wedding day. Are you readying yourself? If you don't feel compelled to be a servant to servant's, to be stooping to wash their feet, it's hard to see how you are readying yourself for that glorious day.

Do what Abigail did in verse forty-one - Arise and bow down.

