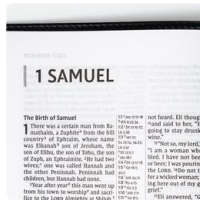


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1 Samuel 23 - 25



1 Samuel - Steve Gregg

In this text, Steve Gregg reflects on verses from the Old Testament book of 1 Samuel, discussing David's encounters with Saul and his rise to power. Gregg emphasizes David's dependence on God and his willingness to trust in divine intervention when faced with dangerous situations. He also touches on themes of loyalty, forgiveness, and justice throughout the narrative, noting how individuals like Abigail and the Gibeonites played key roles in shaping David's legacy. Through his analysis, Gregg engages with the complex characters and motivations found in 1 Samuel, offering insights into the challenges and triumphs that David experienced on his path to becoming king.

Transcript

Now we'll be turning to 1 Samuel chapter 23, and we're still in the midst of David's time of being a refugee, a fugitive really, from injustice. He would have been called a fugitive from justice because it was the police that were chasing him, but the police were taking their orders from a wicked tyrant. And of course, any attempt to arrest David was really an attempt to punish an innocent man.

He had done nothing wrong. And so it was really injustice that he was fleeing from. And he was joined, as we saw in chapter 2, by a group of people who were people who were kind of marginalized in Saul's kingdom, and who were probably people who had been loyal to David.

They were apparently, many of them, militarily proficient people, and could well have been originally part of the thousand soldiers that David led when he was working for Saul. When Saul had given him authority over a thousand soldiers, some of these might have been among those. Maybe all of them were.

And so he's now also got the sword of Goliath. There aren't a lot of swords in Israel because the Philistines were trying to keep that from happening. They didn't want there to be weapons in Israel.

But David has Goliath's sword. He fled initially into Gath, hoping to hide from Saul in enemy territory, but the enemy recognized David was their enemy, and he had to feign

madness so that he'd be let go. And the last we read, Doeg, the Edomite, had reported on Ahimelech and his sons, the priests, as having helped David when David was fleeing.

And so Saul has killed all the priests, except for one, Abiathar, who has escaped. And he came to David, and he became part of David's entourage and traveled with him. So David actually had a priest with him, and that made it possible for him to inquire of God, using the ephod and the ermine thumim and so forth.

So that's the last we saw. In chapter 23, then they told David, saying, look, the Philistines are fighting against Kilot, and they are robbing the threshing floors. Therefore David inquired of the Lord, saying, shall I go and attack these Philistines? And the Lord said to David, go and attack the Philistines and save Kilot.

Now this inquiry of the Lord was almost certainly done through the ermine thumim. Now that the priest, Abiathar, had joined him, he could make this kind of inquiry from the Lord. And from time to time we find David seeking guidance that way.

And so God actually said, yeah, go save the city of Kilot from the Philistines. And David's men said to him, look, we are afraid here in Judah. How much more if we go to Kilot against the armies of the Philistines? You know, we're having a hard enough time avoiding our own armies coming against us, Saul's armies, and now we're going to go engage the Philistine armies too.

And David inquired of the Lord again, and the Lord said, arise, go down to Kilot, for I will deliver the Philistines into your hands. And so God gave him an answer once, but because of the protest of his men, he had to go and ask God again, and God gave him the same answer. And so David and his men went to Kilot and fought with the Philistines and struck them with a mighty blow and took away their livestock.

So David saved the inhabitants of Kilot. Now they took their livestock, no doubt, to eat. I doubt if they were going to keep them with them because they're wandering around hiding in the desert.

When you're running from armies, you don't have a lot of cows and sheep with you. First of all, they draw a lot of attention when you're trying to stay low profile. And secondly, they are rather slow moving, so they probably just took the livestock and slaughtered it right there and ate it so they could have a rare meal of meat.

Maybe they made a lot of jerky to take with them, but I'm sure they didn't take animals on the hoof with them. That wouldn't be very convenient for their lifestyle. Now it happened when Abiathar, the son of Ahimelech, fled to David at Kilot that he went down with an ephod in his hand, and Saul was told that David had gone to Kilot.

So Saul said, God has delivered him into my hand, for he has shut himself in by entering a town that has gates and bars. Apparently after driving off the Philistines and defeating

them, David and his men just took shelter in the city itself. Why not? It beats a cave.

A bed once in a while doesn't hurt, and having walled cities around you. But Saul, hearing about that, said, okay, this city is where David and his men have, as it were, hemmed themselves in, a walled city. They can't escape if I besiege the city.

So Saul called all the people together for war to go down to Kilot to besiege David and his men. And when David knew that Saul plotted evil against him, he said to Abiathar, the priest, bring the ephod here. And David said, O Lord God of Israel, your servant has certainly heard that Saul seeks to come to Kilot to destroy the city for my sake.

Will the men of Kilot deliver me into his hand? Will Saul come down as your servant has heard? O Lord God of Israel, I pray, tell your servant. And the Lord said, he will come down. And David said, will the men of Kilot deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul? And the Lord said, they will deliver you.

So David and his men, about 600, it was 400 before, but now it's grown. Perhaps some of the men of Kilot joined him, arose and departed from Kilot and went wherever they could go. Then it was told to Saul that David had escaped from Kilot, so he halted the expedition.

It's interesting. This is a very unusual story in that God gave revelation of what would have happened. God said, yes, Saul will come down.

Yes, the people of Kilot will deliver you. And then it didn't happen because David fled. Obviously the instructions he received or the information he got from God was intended to warn David to flee.

And therefore God's word was, there was an implicit condition. Yes, Saul will come down and yes, the men of Kilot will give you over to him if you don't flee. You know, he didn't say if you don't flee, but I mean, that was obviously the subtext that if you don't flee, this is going to happen.

So it's interesting when God, you know, God's knowledge of the future even knows what would have happened. He knows what Saul would have done, what the men of Kilot would have done, put in a certain position. Not just what they did do or in this case didn't do.

But when people wonder, you know, how does God know and tell the future? There's a lot of different philosophical notions about that. And some say God doesn't know the future until it happens. And some say he knows because he's going to make it all happen.

Others say, you know, he can just see it in like the eternal now. Lots of different opinions. But when God actually says, this is what will happen.

But only it doesn't happen because circumstances change. Then it means that God knew alternative realities, alternative futures. You know, if David stayed there, then Saul will come down.

The men of Kilot will deliver him. That's what God revealed would happen in the future. But David changing course changes the future.

And I don't know, it just kind of tweaks the mind a little bit to think about how that is. How God knows not only the future, but he knows alternative futures. What would happen if we did this? He can see it play out and how far down, what decisions people will make and how that will impact us.

And then that particular future he foresees doesn't even materialize. Because some other choice is made and a different future set of circumstances come about. And David stayed in strongholds in the wilderness and remained in the mountains of the wilderness of Zipf.

Saul sought him every day, but God did not deliver him into his hand. So David saw that Saul had come out to seek his life. And David was in the wilderness of Zipf in a forest.

Then Jonathan, Saul's son, arose and went to David in the woods and strengthened his hand in God. Strengthened his hand means encouraged him. It's a figure of speech.

Now, Jonathan knew where to find him, though Saul did not. So again, either Jonathan was part of the intelligence network that David was keeping in touch with friends in town, through some kind of network, or else, well, I can't think of any other way it could be happening. Because Jonathan knew where to find him and to come down and meet him.

Now, when you're traveling in the wilderness with 600 men, that's a group that's pretty hard to conceal. I mean, we're out in the desert. You could see 600 men from a considerable distance.

Of course, there were mountains and things to obscure them. And many times they were hiding on the other side of a mountain from where Saul was. And sometimes not very far from each other, as it turned out.

But in a sense, since David did not intend to fight against Saul, having 600 men with him was almost a detriment. Just because it would draw far more attention. It's harder to conceal.

David alone could hide in a cave or under a bush. But with 600 men, he's actually, he's got to keep them safe, too. Because he's their captain now.

And they do run military raids, but not against those who are chasing them. They do it

against the Philistines and others. But they don't do it against those who want to kill them.

And so David really has quite a challenge on his hands with these 600 guys in the wilderness. He's got to feed them. If he was alone, he don't have to find food for himself.

But he's got to somehow feed 600 men on a regular basis. They've got to do their laundry. Now, that probably was not an issue.

They probably didn't ever do laundry in those days. But the point is that there's a lot of needs, practical needs for that kind of people. And they're not necessarily providing any benefit to him.

If they were coming to fight by his side to defend him against Saul, that'd be one thing. Then 600, even 1,000 would be nice to have. But since they're not there for that purpose, they're just eaters.

They're just people to support and to keep alive and to be with him fleeing. Having that many people with you, at least you're not lonely. But it's like a father having that many children to care for in a hard time.

David really, by letting these people come with him, was being gracious, I would say. Because he could have said, no, you'll just slow me down here. You'll draw attention to me.

Now, Jonathan, who had not fled with David, nonetheless makes contact with David here and goes down to see him. And he encourages David. And this is going to be the last time David and Jonathan will see each other.

They don't know that. And Jonathan actually thinks the day will come when he and David will stand together after Saul's death and reign together. But that's not going to happen.

In verse 17, he said to David, Do not fear, for the hand of Saul, my father, shall not find you. You shall be king over Israel, and I shall be next to you. Even my father Saul knows that.

And so that's interesting that here's Jonathan, who really was the heir to the throne, that he was just willing to just not be, just not be the king. Let this other guy, who's not even a relative, be king instead. If Jonathan would kill David, which he would be in a position to do since David trusted him, Jonathan could just look forward to being the next king of Israel.

But he just had no aspirations that way. He was a godly man and knew that God wanted David to be king. So he's willing to just go with that, to give David that honor.

He said, Even my father knows you're going to be king next. So the two of them made a

covenant before the Lord, and David stayed in the woods, and Jonathan went back to his own house. That contrast is interesting because David's 600 men didn't go back to their own houses.

They suffered with David in the wilderness and put their lives at risk. And Jonathan didn't do that. And again, I'm not really sure why he didn't.

But since he really did love David and cared for him, it's possible he did that because he hoped that by being an influence at court in the government that he might be able to somehow ameliorate David's suffering and stand up for David in certain circumstances where he'd need a friend in court. Then the Ziphites came to Saul at Gibeah, saying, Is David not hiding with us in the strongholds of the woods, in the hills of Hathielah, which is on the south of Jethro? Now therefore, O king, come down according to all the desire of your soul. Come down, and our part shall be to deliver him into the king's hand.

So Saul said, Blessed are you of the Lord, for you have compassion on me. Please go and find out for sure and see the place where his hideout is and who has seen him there, for I am told that he is very crafty. See therefore and take knowledge of all the lurking places where he hides and come back to me with certainty, and I will go with you.

And it shall be, if he is in the land, that I will search for him throughout all the clans of Judah. Now, Saul wants to find out where David hides. Rather than just coming down and chanting on him, and he doesn't want the Ziphites to show their hand to David.

He wants them to not make it clear that they're his enemies, so they could be able to watch David and kind of just bring intelligence back to Saul about what are all the hiding places David and his men go to, so that when Saul comes down, it'd make it easy for him to just locate David and pick him up. And when this was happening, David wrote Psalm 54. So David was aware of what the Ziphites were doing, and he wrote a psalm on the occasion.

Psalm 54, the title says, With stringed instruments, a contemplation of David, when the Ziphites went and said to Saul, Is David not hiding with us? So this is the time we're reading about. And at that time, David wrote these words, So again, David begins with his complaint to God about how people are betraying him, and his prayer to God to save him. And then he ends with his affirmations that God will save him.

So David, again, always has his ups and downs, as any man would. But when he is in danger, he cries out to God, he complains about the injustice of what's going on, asks God for help, and then he just kind of says, Okay, and God's going to help me. So he just kind of rests in God.

He strengthens himself in the Lord. And then he's encouraged. So Saul has sent message back to the people of Ziph that they should spy out the places where David goes.

In verse 24, it says, So they arose and went to Ziph before Saul. But David and his men were in the wilderness of Maon, in the plain of the south of Jeshamon. When Saul and his men went to seek him, they told David.

Therefore he went down to the rock and stayed in the wilderness of Maon. And when Saul heard that, he pursued David in the wilderness of Maon. And Saul went on one side of the mountain, and David and his men on the other side of the mountain.

So apparently, at this point, Saul's armies got closer than at any other time to apprehending David. And it looked like, you know, it was just a matter of time. They're going to close in.

There's this one mountain, and David and his men are on the far side of it, and Saul and his men are on the other side. Now, I don't know if Saul knew how close he was to where David was, because he couldn't see him. He couldn't see through the mountain that David was on the other side.

But apparently, it was so that it was mighty close to the end of this pursuit. But then God intervened for him. It says in the middle of verse 26.

It says, Now, this was a case where, I mean, God makes it very clear. His sovereignty allows David to escape when he had no other likelihood of escaping. Saul's men were encircling David and his men, and that would have been the end.

At the providential time, God brings the Philistines against Israel so that Saul has to make a decision. Are we going to finish up this pursuit of David and then let the Philistines gain the advantage, or do we leave David? I'm surprised Saul made the decision he did. I'm surprised he decided to go for the Philistines instead of for David, because he was so paranoid of David.

But apparently, the Philistine invasion was a much greater national crisis, and so he had to make the hard choice and go the other direction. Now, it happened, chapter 24, when Saul had returned from following the Philistines, that it was told him, saying, Take note, David is in the wilderness of En Gedi. So there were spies all over the place reporting on David, and for why? Just for political advantage, of course, to be in good graces with the king.

Nobody could possibly have thought David was the bad guy here. And so there were people willing to take the side of the bad king against an innocent war hero, really. I mean, a veteran of Saul's army who had been a hero and who had done nothing wrong, and people knew that, but they just were willing to take the side of the man in power and try to get some favors from him by delivering David over to him.

Then Saul took 3,000 chosen men from all Israel, and he went to seek David and his men in the rocks of the wild goats, as they were called. So he came to the sheepfolds by the

road where there was a cave, and Saul went in to attend to his needs. This is what people did when they had to go to the bathroom.

They had to go find a private place. A cave was very commonly used for such things. So Saul had to go in there and take care of his needs, and David and his men were staying in the recesses of the cave.

Then the men of David said to him, This is the day of which the Lord said to you, Behold, I will deliver your enemy into your hand, that you may do to him as it seems good to you. And David arose and secretly cut off a corner of Saul's robe. Now, it's not likely he did this while Saul was wearing it.

I mean, the cave wouldn't be so dark that David could really come up and cut something off his robe while he was wearing it. But he was in there going to the bathroom. He apparently had taken his robe off and laid it aside, and David was able to get to the robe while Saul was away from it and cut a piece off of it just to mark, as it were, his territory and say, I was here and you are at my mercy.

Now, it happened afterward that David's heart troubled him because he had cut Saul's robe. He felt like it was not respectful to cut the king's robe, and he was convicted about that. It's amazing.

Saul doesn't feel any conviction about trying to kill David, who's innocent, and David feels convicted about even just cutting Saul's robe and doing anything at all so disrespectful to the king as that. And he said to his men, The Lord forbid that I should do this thing to my master. The Lord's anointed to stretch out my hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the Lord.

So David restrained his servants with these words and did not allow them to rise up against Saul. And Saul got up from the cave and went on his way. Now, these men must have been mighty loyal to David because they easily, his men were in the cave.

Certainly, they could overpower Saul and kill him with ease. Then they could just walk out of the cave in front of Saul's armies and say, Your master is dead. I'm the king now.

And the armies probably would have said, Hail David! I mean, these people, they'd just go with whoever's taking charge. They didn't have any particular grievance against David. They were just following orders from the king when they were pursuing him.

And so, if David had killed Saul, it'd probably be a relief to most people in the military. They'd probably just follow David. And the neat thing about that for the other men would be that they wouldn't be, their lives wouldn't be in danger.

You know, they already recognized David as their king, but they were living dangerously by being loyal to him. But if they'd killed Saul right then, which was obviously they were

strongly tempted to do, they saw it as God's providence to deliver Saul into their hands, they would have been able to go home to their family. They would have not had to run for their lives all the time.

And yet, because David said, No, don't do it, they all obeyed. So, they were loyal to his leadership, though it would have been greatly to their advantage to kill Saul. And I'm sure they would have all liked to get back to their families and their homes.

So, David restrained his servants, didn't let them kill Saul. And Saul got up from the cave and went on his way, not knowing what had happened. Then, verse 8, David also rose afterward, went out of the cave and called out to Saul, probably when he was a safe distance, saying, My Lord, the king.

And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth and bowed down. And David said to Saul, Why do you listen to the words of men who say, Indeed, David seeks your harm? Remember one of the Psalms that David wrote, that we read yesterday that he was, when he was being pursued by Saul, he mentioned the men, the evil men, who twist his words and so forth. And I mentioned those are no doubt people who were trying to suck up to Saul and be, you know, get positions in the government.

And so, they were, they were taking Saul's side against David, trying to justify Saul's actions by making false accusations against David. And apparently, David knew that there were people saying that about him, saying that he was there to try to kill Saul, to sort of feed Saul's paranoia and keep this pursuit going on. And David said, Don't listen to people like that, who say David seeks your harm.

Look, this day your eyes have seen that the Lord delivered you today into my hand in the cave. And someone urged me to kill you. I won't identify anybody because I don't want them to get in trouble, but my eyes spared you.

And I said, I will not stretch out my hand against my Lord, for he is the Lord's anointed. Moreover, my father, see, yes, see the corner of your robe in my hand. For in that I cut off the corner of your robe and did not kill you, know and see that there is neither evil nor rebellion in my hand.

And I have not sinned against you, yet you hunt for my life to take it. Then the Lord judge between you and me and let the Lord avenge me on you. But my hand shall not be against you.

As the proverb of the ancient says, wickedness proceeds from the wicked. But my hand shall not be against you. After whom has the king of Israel come out? Whom do you pursue, a dead dog, a flea? Therefore let the Lord be judge and judge between me and you and see and plead my case and deliver me out of your hand.

Now he points out, you know, I was close enough to kill you because I was close enough

to cut off your garment. And here's the proof that you were vulnerable to me and I've just proven that I'm not interested in killing you or else I would have done it. He says, there's a proverb that we all know, which was apparently current at the time.

Wickedness proceeds from the wicked. Sounds like a tautology. It doesn't sound like it's really a profound observation at all.

Except what he's saying is you can tell if a man is wicked by if wickedness is proceeding from him. And I didn't do a wicked thing, but you're doing a wicked thing. So you're the wicked one, not me.

People are telling you I'm wicked. Well, wickedness proceeds from wicked people. And what's proceeding for me isn't wickedness.

So that should tell you something. Who's wicked here? You're wicked because your wickedness is proceeding from you, not from me. So I'm just, you know, I'm not really a formidable threat to you.

I'm a dead dog. I'm a flea. What are you seeking me for? I'm harmless.

I'm not really even somebody that should interest you. I'm not that significant. I'm just like a flea to you.

And so Saul at that moment had a moment of sanity, but didn't last long. So it was when David had finished speaking these words to Saul that Saul said, is this your voice, my son, David? And Saul lifted up his voice and wept. Then he said to David, you are more righteous than I for you have rewarded me with good, whereas I have rewarded you with evil.

And you have shown this day how you have dealt well with me. For when the Lord delivered me into your hand, you did not kill me. For if a man finds his enemy, will he let him get away safely? Therefore may the Lord reward you with good for what you have done to me this day.

And now I know indeed that you shall surely be king and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand. Therefore swear now to me by the Lord that you will not cut off my descendants after me and that you will not destroy my name from my father's house. So David swore to Saul and Saul went home.

And David and his men went up to the stronghold. David didn't go home. Saul has just promised, basically, he's had a change of heart.

I know you're going to be the king. Now Saul announced that in front of his whole army. I know you're going to be the next king.

I mean, it seems like when the king is saying things like that publicly that should be the

end of the controversy between the two. And he says, I'm evil and you're good. You've rewarded me good for my evil.

I've rewarded you evil for your good. You know, I know you're going to be the king. The kingdom is yours.

And David swore that he wouldn't hurt Saul's descendants, which he did not do. He didn't cut them off completely. He did turn over seven of them to the Gibeonites on one occasion because there was a curse on Israel because of something Saul had done to the Gibeonites.

And so the Gibeonites required that seven of Saul's sons be handed over to them. And David did hand them over to him. And that was the death of those men.

But David didn't cut off all the descendants of Saul because Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son, was kept alive and no doubt had children. Now, chapter 25. Then Samuel died.

And the Israelites gathered together and lamented for him and buried him at his home in Ramah. And David arose and went down to the wilderness of Paran. Now, David apparently was not in fellowship with Samuel at this time because he was running and hiding.

And so he didn't get to show his respects and do homage and so forth to Samuel. But Samuel was the one that this book opened with. The birth of Samuel was how this whole story began.

And Samuel had been in the center stage with the installation of both Saul and the anointing of David and even protecting David from Saul initially at Ramah. And now this is... Samuel checks out here. And now this makes it very clear that Samuel didn't write the books of Samuel because the story continues after Samuel's death.

And that means there were other prophets besides Samuel who contributed to the story. And we believe that Nathan and Gad were those men. Now, there's another interesting romance.

Now, there was a man in Maon whose business was in Carmel. And the man was very rich. He had 3,000 sheep and 1,000 goats.

And he was shearing his sheep in Carmel. The name of the man was Nabal, which actually means fool. Don't know if that's his real name or if that's just what people called him because he was, in fact, a fool.

And it may have been a nickname. And the name of his wife was Abigail. And she was a woman of good understanding and beautiful appearance.

But the man was harsh and evil in his doings. And he was of the house of Caleb. Now,

this is setting something up, of course, for us to be sympathetic toward wanting to see the hero and the heroine get together here.

The heroine is beautiful, as heroines always are in movies. And she's also a wise woman and a virtuous woman, as is clear. But, of course, she's in an unhappy marriage with a guy who's a total jerk.

However, our friend David, he's handsome and good-looking and heroic. So we've got a hero and a heroine here. It's almost easy to predict what's going to happen here, even if we didn't already know.

When David heard in the wilderness that Nabal was shearing his sheep, which was a seasonal activity, 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. 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.

Now, I have heard that you were shearers. You have shearers. Your shepherds were with us, and we did not hurt them, nor was there anything missing from them, all the while that 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 come on a feast day. Please give whatever comes to your hand to your servants and to your son David.

So when David's young men came and spoke to Nabal according to all these words, in the name of David, they waited. Now, what David is saying is, we've been in the territory where your shepherders have been grazing their sheep. We're hungry, but we've never stolen any of your sheep.

We never molested your shepherds, though we could easily have done so. If we were outlaws, we could easily have raided and taken as many sheep as we wanted, but just ask them. We've never threatened them, never hurt them, never taken any of your sheep.

If anything, we've protected them from other outlaws. So now that it's a shearing day, and a shearing season was a time where a lot of workers got together and they took the occasion to have a big feast and celebrate. It's like harvest, harvesting the wool on the sheep.

A time of harvest was always a time of celebration, and for shepherders, the day that they collected all the wool, and that was what they were going to make their money on, that was a time for having a great festival and celebration. And so David says, we've come while you're celebrating, you've got a lot of food on hand, you're rich, you're a rich man, we're kind of hungry, if you wouldn't mind, we're begging you to give us a little money. In fact, he might have even been saying that you can sort of pay us for being

your protectors.

We've been sort of guarding your sheep and your shepherds all this time, and no harm has come to them, not only not from us, but from anyone else either, because we were there. And therefore, you might consider yourself indebted to us, and out of appreciation, give us a little something to eat. And when Nabal answered David's servants, he said, who is David, and who is the son of Jesse? There are many servants nowadays who break away each one from his master.

Shall I then take my bread and my water and my meat that I have killed from my shears and give it to men who I do not know where they're from? Now, of course, Nabal knew who David was. He's just being a jerk. David was a national hero.

And Nabal knew that David was running from Saul, certainly. I mean, Saul's armies had been in the very area searching for David. You can't miss him.

You know, when you got 3,000 men marching through your backyard, you know that something's afoot. And so the man knew definitely who David was and what David was up to and why, and why David was running. He described David as a servant who broke away and ran away from his master, meaning from Saul.

And now, in Nabal's defense, and there isn't much to defend him, but in his defense, you realize that if he had voluntarily given food to David, then, and if Saul had heard about it, Saul would have done the same thing to Nabal and his family that he did to the priests at Nab. You know, someone gives David food, they're collaborating with Saul's enemy, and his paranoia would cause him to just execute them. So, Nabal, possibly when David's men came, had to think about this before he gave his answer.

And no doubt he was very much aware that if he fed David and his men, this could go very badly for him. On the other hand, he was indebted to David, even if he wasn't. He certainly knew that David was innocent.

Everyone knew that Saul was crazy and murderous. I mean, he was throwing javelins at his own son, you know, without any serious provocation. Saul was a madman.

The country was ruled by a madman. David was an innocent man. And it's like the decision to help David would be like a decision to try to take Jews in in a Nazi-occupied country, you know.

If I take the Jews in and the Nazis find out, they're going to put me in a prison camp or shoot me. So, I guess I'll just let them take their chances. Well, some people, a lot of Christians actually did that during the Nazi era, but some didn't.

Some decided they would go ahead and side with who they knew were innocent, side against the tyrannical government. And some Christians suffered for that, obviously.

Some Christians did go to prison camps for that.

Nabal was put in that position to make a decision. Am I going to stand up for the righteous person, the innocent person who's been persecuted, you know, without cause? Or am I going to play it safe and keep my nose clean, keep my head below the ground and not draw attention to myself from Saul by doing something controversial? And so he just put off David's men with this really insulting answer. And so he insulted David, essentially.

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 400 men went with David and 200 stayed with the supplies.

Now, 400 would probably be enough to take on. Now, since they'd killed some Philistines, they all had swords now. See, they didn't have swords before, but they had fought a war against Philistines and defeated them.

The Philistines had swords. So David's men now all had swords they could strap on. At least 400 of them did.

And so they were going to go and just take the food by force. They felt it was owed to them. And David, of course, was reacting carnally.

His pride was hurt by this intentional insult. And so it wasn't just that he was the type of guy who would rob from someone who wouldn't give him a donation, but the man had spoken gruffly and in a provocative way and David was just in a mood to be provoked. And so he says, put on your swords, we're going to go take what we need this way.

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

And David's men defended us from other dangers out there. Now, therefore, know and consider that you will do 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. Now, these are his servants talking to his wife about him.

Our master's a scoundrel. Apparently, that was common way for the servants even to talk openly about him, that he was just so rotten, even they didn't figure that his wife would disagree. Then Abigail made haste and took 200 loaves of bread, two skins of wine, five sheep already dressed, five sayas of roasted grain and 100 clusters of raisins and 200 cakes of figs and loaded them on donkeys.

And she said to her servants, go, on before me. See, I am coming after you. But she did not tell her husband Nabal.

So it was, as she rode on the donkey, that she went down under cover of the hill and there was David and his men, there were David and his men, coming down toward her. And she met them. So they were coming down with their swords at their sides, ready to attack her family.

And she intervenes. Now, of course, she did not act with her husband's approval. And so her actions sometimes are raised as a question of, was she an unsubmitive wife? I mean, she had a guy who was a jerk for a husband, and so she just did the right thing, even though that wouldn't be to his liking.

Well, she didn't actually disobey any orders that he gave. And whether he did or not, she might have disobeyed. We don't know.

We know that she took the right side on things and she has certainly never, it's never held against her in Scripture. There's lots of things people do in Scripture that we're never told specifically this is the right thing or the wrong thing for them to do. We're just told what they did, and it worked out okay.

But it does seem that there are times when a man is acting so much against the interests of his own family, because he's a fool, that sometimes the woman just has to kind of take charge because the husband's bringing disaster on his family. Now, of course, this would be a judgment call between her and her husband's opinion, because her husband, I'm sure, was thinking, if we do help David, we'll get wiped out by Saul's armies. And she's thinking, well, if we don't help David, we'll get wiped out by David.

We're kind of in the middle here in this conflict between David and Saul. But of course, she also probably was more concerned than Nabal was about doing the right thing. You know, she, by taking foot out to David, was bringing a risk to her family at the hands of Saul.

But if we're going to be either on Saul's side or David's side and take the risks of being wiped out by the enemy of the person we favor, let's favor the person on the right side. She at least saw David was the righteous one, Saul was not. So she's going to, if they were going to suffer, they're going to suffer on the side of righteousness, on the side of David, rather than on the side of Saul.

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

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. Now it's interesting how he took this oath. May the Lord do so and more to my enemies, if I leave one.

He took a vow. Usually a person would wish that on themselves. If I don't fulfill this vow, may something awful happen to me.

But he said, If I don't fulfill this vow, may something awful happen to my enemies. Play it safe that way. That way he could actually change and allow the penalty to come on his enemies.

He did end up changing. Now when Abigail saw David, she hastened to dismount from her donkey. She fell on her face before David and bowed to the ground.

So she fell at his feet and said, Oh my, oh me, my Lord. Excuse me. On me, my Lord.

On me, let this iniquity be. Oh me. And please let your maidservant speak in your ears and hear the words of your maidservant.

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.

He's called a fool and that's what he is, she says. But I, your maidservant, did not see the young men of my Lord whom you sent. 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.

And now this present, which your maidservant has brought to my Lord, let it be given to the young men who follow my Lord. 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.

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 them out as from a pocket of a sling. 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, 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. So he accepted this as wise counselor. Recognize she was a very wise woman.

She didn't only just ask for mercy and say, here, I'm giving you a gift. Could you leave my family alone? She said, you know, there's more at stake than this. You are going to

be the next king.

So apparently this was widely known. May the Lord bring to pass the things he's spoken of you. She knew and apparently everyone must have known that God had spoken certain things about David and that he was going to be the next king.

And she knew that he was being pursued unjustly. But she says, you know, your life is going to be bound up in the bundle of the Lord. He's going to preserve you close to himself.

He's going to fling out your enemies like rocks out of a sling. That is, they're going to be thrown away by the Lord, like rocks are, you know, God's going to clutch you to himself. He's going to cast away your enemies.

Interesting that she used the sling as a illustration, perhaps intentionally because of David's use of a sling in the past. And she said, you know, God is going to fulfill his promises to you. You're going to be the king, but you don't want that to happen.

And you don't want to look back and say that you did something foolish. You know, you'll regret this. Killing Nabal isn't going to bring you to the throne.

You're going to be brought to the throne anyway. But you don't want to get to the throne and realize that you killed somebody rashly and that you avenged yourself. That's not like you.

You're not the type to avenge yourself. So reconsider. And David said to Abigail, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who sent you this day to me.

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. For indeed, as the Lord God of Israel lives, who has kept me back from hurting you, unless you had hastened and come to me, surely by morning light no males would have been left to Nabal.

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. Then Abigail went to Nabal, and there he was holding a feast in the house, like a 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 the morning light. 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.

Then it happened after about ten days, that the Lord struck Nabal and he died. Now,

when she told him what she had done in helping David, his heart became like a stone. That probably is an ancient way of saying he had a stroke, and he died ten days later from a stroke, in all likelihood, or a heart attack.

Why did that happen? Was that just a stroke of the angel of God judging him? Well, his death ten days later was seen as God striking him. It doesn't say whether the initial stroke was from God or not. It may have been a natural reaction, because, I mean, I'm just reading between the lines, he may have felt, oh, now we're in danger, because we've helped David, and now Saul's going to come down, and we're in as much trouble as David is, as much trouble as the priests and Nab were.

And he may have just been in shock and fear, and had a heart attack over it. From which he died ten days later. It's hard to say.

But it was the stroke of God that killed him, so the scripture says. 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. Well, then he'd inherit all that wealth of Nabal. Marry a rich widow.

And the guy was rich. And when the servants of David had come to Abigail at Carmel, they spoke to her, saying, David sent to us to ask you to become his wife. Then she arose, bowed her face to the earth, and said, Here is your maid servant, a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my Lord.

So Abigail arose in haste, and rode on a donkey, attended by five of her maidens. And she followed the messengers of David and became his wife. And David also took Ahinoam of Jezreel.

And so both of them were his wives. Of course, he was already married to Michael, although Saul had taken her and divorced them and given her to another man named Paltiel. It says that in verse 44, Saul had given Michael, his daughter, David's wife to Paltie, the son of Laish, who was from Galim.

So David took two wives while he was fleeing. One was Abigail, and one was perhaps another one that he'd already taken. We don't know.

He also took or had taken Ahinoam of Jezreel. Eventually, David had eight wives that we know of, including Michael, whom he took back. Once he came to power, he took Michael back from her second husband because she had no legitimate right to be married to him.

David had not divorced her. She had been taken from him wrongfully by force. And so the second husband didn't get to keep her because he didn't rightfully have her, as we

shall see later on.