

David and Abigail

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Date: 16 March 2014

[0 : 00] Psalm 23, the whole of the psalm. The Lord is my shepherd, no want shall I know. He makes me lie down where the green pastures grow. He leads me to rest where the calm waters flow.

Psalm 23, the whole of the psalm. That's the singed psalms version on page 28. The Lord is my shepherd. We'll stand to sing. The Lord is my shepherd, no want shall I know. He makes me lie down where the green pastures grow. He leads me to rest where the calm waters flow.

My wandering steps he brings back to his way. In straight paths of righteousness making me stay. And this he has done his great thing to display. Though I walk in death's valley where darkness is near.

[1 : 23] Because you are with me, no evil and fear. Your Lord and your suffering, me comfort and cheer.

In the sight of my enemies, that table you spread. The eye of the joy, senior, pour on my head. My path overflows and I'm graciously fed. Though surely your covenant mercy and grace Will follow me closely in all of my ways.

I will dwell in the house of the Lord all my days. Let's come to the Lord in prayer.

Let's bow our heads. Our Father in heaven, we rejoice this evening at the language that we can use from your word to describe our relationship to you.

[2 : 51] And for the picture that we have just been singing of the care that the shepherd takes over his sheep. And the safety in which the sheep walk and feed and lie down in peace.

We give thanks that that belongs to your people this evening. We have the peace of God that passes all understanding. We give thanks that having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

A peace that rejoices in the reconciliation between sinners and yourself.

A peace in which we are able to come to you confidently knowing that we are loved with a unique and extraordinary love.

That we are loved by God. We know how important it is to be loved in this world. But how much more important it is to be loved by God with a love that cannot be bettered.

[4 : 09] And a love that continues all the way through our lives here in this world and indeed beyond this world.

We give thanks that although our wandering steps lead us sometimes off the track, that you restore our soul and make us to walk in the paths of righteousness.

We give thanks that even although we walk in the valley of the shadow of death, you are with us and your rod and your staff bring us comfort and strength and that assurance that we are safe in the Lord.

We give thanks that we are surrounded by our enemies. The enemy that seeks to destroy us using the variety of ways in which he seeks to ambush us and in which we are very often brought to the brink of the edge.

We give thanks, O Lord, that you are working in every experience that we have, even the dangerous ones, to teach us and to show us and to bring us through all of these dangers, rejoicing in the Lord.

[5 : 43] And we give thanks for the promise that belongs to your people this evening, that we shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Father in heaven, we pray that you will bless these great truths to each one of us this evening.

Remind us of who we are and remind us that the Son of God has died for us, giving himself on the cross in order to redeem us and in order that we may be yours, redeemed from sin and set free from its guilt and from its power.

And we pray that with the new lives that your people have, that we will live for you with God at the center, lives which glorify God and lives which obey you because you have said, if you love me, then keep my commandments.

And so our Father in heaven, we pray tonight that this service will be a testimony to what you mean to us, that we pray that as we raise our voices, as we lift our voices to you, that you will come and gather and bring the Holy Spirit amongst us, opening our hearts and receiving our worship.

For we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. We're going to read together in 1 Samuel in chapter 25. 1 Samuel chapter 25 is on page 297.

[7 : 22] I'm going to read about half of the chapter, then we're going to sing once again. 1 Samuel chapter 25. 1 Samuel chapter 25.

1 Samuel chapter 25.

And thus you shall greet him. Peace be to you and peace be to your house and peace be to all that you have. 2 Samuel chapter 26. I hear that you have shearers. Now your shepherds have been with us.

We did them no harm and they missed nothing all the time 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 you have to hand to your servants and to your son David. When David's young men came, they said all this to Nabal in the name of David. Then they waited.

[9 : 03] Nabal answered David's servants, Who is David? Who is the son of Jesse? There are many servants these days who are breaking away from their master. Shall I take my bread and my water and my meat that I have killed for my shearers and give it to men who have come from I do not know where?

So David's young men turned away and came back and told him all this. And David said to his men, Then every man strap on his sword.

And every man of them strapped on his sword. David also strapped on his sword. And about 400 men went up after David while 200 remained with the baggage. But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, Behold, David sent messengers out to the wilderness to greet our master and he railed at them.

Yet the men were very good to us and we suffered no harm and we did not miss anything when we were in the fields as long as we were with them. They were a wall to us both by night and day. All the while we were with them keeping the sheep.

Now therefore know this and consider what you should do for harm is determined against our master and against all his house. And he's such a worthless man that one cannot speak to him. Then Abigail made haste and took 200 loaves, two skins of wine, five sheep already prepared, five sears of parched grain and a hundred clusters of raisins and 200 cakes of figs and laid them on donkeys.

[10 : 29] She said to her young men, Go on before me. Behold, I come after you. But she did not tell her husband, Nabal. Now she rode on the donkey and came down under the cover of the mountain.

Behold, David and his men came down towards her and she met them. Now David had said, Surely in vain I have guarded all that this fellow has in the wilderness, that nothing was missed of all that belonged to him and he has returned me evil for good.

God do so to the enemies of David and more also if by morning I leave so much as one male of all who belong to him. When Abigail saw David, she hurried and got down from the donkey and fell before David on her face and bowed to the ground.

She fell at his feet and said, On me alone, my lord, be the guilt. Please let your servant speak in your ears and hear the words of your servant. Let not, my lord, regard this worthless fellow Nabal for as his name is, so is he.

Nabal is his name and folly is with him. If you look at the bottom of the page, you'll see that the word Nabal means fool. But I, your servant, did not see the young men of my lord who you sent.

[11 : 41] Now then, my lord, as the lord lives and as your soul lives, because the lord has restrained you from blood guilt and from saving with your own hand, now let your enemies and those who seek to do evil to my lord be as Nabal.

Well, we'll leave it there. We'll come back to it in a few moments time after we sing together in another psalm. This time it's Psalm 61. It's on page 293. Page 293.

Psalm 61 is the traditional version. And we're going to sing from the beginning down to the verse mark five. That's the first five stanzas. Psalm 61, the traditional version of the psalm.

O God, give ear unto my cry, unto my prayer attend. From the utmost corner of the land my cry to thee I'll send. What time my heart is overwhelmed and in perplexity, do thou me lead unto the rock that higher is than I.

Psalm 61, first five stanzas, we're going to stand to sing. O God, give ear unto my cry, unto thy prayer attend.

[13 : 00] From the utmost corner of the land my cry to thee I'll send.

What time my heart is overwhelmed and in perplexity, do thou me lead unto the rock that higher is than I.

For thou hast for my refuge be a shelter by thy power and for defense against my foes the heart be a strong tower.

Within thy tower where now could I forever will abide and under cover of thy ways with confidence behind.

For thou hast for thy ways that I did make, O Lord, my God is here.

[15 : 18] Thou hast give me the heritage of those thy name but fear.

Amen. We're going to carry on that reading. 1 Samuel chapter 25 and we're at verse 27. Now Abigail is still speaking and now let this present, she's speaking to David, let this present that your servant has brought to my Lord be given to the young men who follow my Lord.

Please forgive the trespass of your servant for the Lord will certainly make my Lord a sure house because my Lord is fighting the battles of the Lord and evil shall not be found in you so long as you shall live.

If men rise up to pursue you and seek your life, the life of my Lord shall be bound in the bundle of the living in the care of the Lord your God and the lives of your enemies shall, he shall sling out as from the hollow of a sling.

And when the Lord has done to my Lord according to all the good that he has spoken concerning you and has appointed you prince over Israel, my Lord shall have no cause of grief or pangs of conscience for having shed blood without cause or for my Lord taking vengeance himself.

[16 : 39] And the Lord has dealt well with my Lord, then remember your servant. Then David said to Abigail, Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me.

Blessed be your discretion, and blessed be you who have kept me this day from blood guilt and from avenging myself with my own hand. But as surely as the Lord, the God of Israel lives, who has restrained me from hurting you, unless you had hurried and come to meet me truly by morning, there had not been left to Nabal so much as one male.

And David received from her hand what she had brought to him. And he said to her, Go up in peace to your house. See, I have obeyed your voice and I have granted your petition. And Abigail came to Nabal and behold, he was holding a feast in his house like the feast of a king.

And Nabal's heart was merry within him for he was very drunk. So she told him nothing at all until the morning light. In the morning when the wine had gone out of Nabal, his wife told him these things.

And his heart died within him and he became like a stone. And about ten days later, the Lord struck Nabal and he died. When David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, Blessed be the Lord who has avenged the insult I received at the hand of Nabal and has kept back his servant from wrongdoing.

[18 : 12] The Lord has returned the evil of Nabal in his own head. Then David sent and spoke to Abigail to take her as his wife. When the servants of David came to Abigail at Carmel, they said to her, David has sent us to you to take you to him as his wife.

And she rose and bowed with her face to the ground and said, Behold, your handmaid is a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my Lord. And Abigail hurried and rose and mounted a donkey and her five young women attended her.

She followed the messengers of David and became his wife. David also took Ahinoam of Jezreel and both of them became his wives. Saul had given Michal his daughter David's wife to Palti, the son of Laish, who was of Galim.

Amen. And once again, we ask that God will bless his own word to us. For we sing again, I want us to bow our heads once again in prayer.

Our Father, we have just heard your word. We have just been reminded of what happened thousands of years ago in your providence.

[19 : 28] We have, we, we recognize that this is the doing of the Lord. And we recognize the same in our own lives, we pray.

we pray to see what God does. Sometimes we can't see it. And we are sure that David didn't see it at the time.

But looking back, as we must sometimes, we can only see the goodness and the mercy and the protection of the Lord.

And our Father, we pray that you will protect us as well. And we pray that your word will be a blessing to us this evening. We ask that your word will take root in our heart. We pray that the seed of the word will be planted in our heart.

And what we pray for ourselves, we pray for, for others who are meeting as we are this evening, for the church worldwide. And we thank you that there are thousands, indeed millions of people who love the Lord Jesus this evening all over the world and who are reading your word, who have gathered together as we have, who sing your praises and who have come to love Jesus as their saviour and have come to recognise his divinity and what he did on the cross when he gave himself and he rose again on the third day.

[20 : 49] We pray that more will come into your kingdom. We pray that your word will reach more and more people and to that effect we ask, Lord, for all those who have gone out with the gospel. We pray, Lord, for those who are known to us, who have gone out and we know that the whole world stands tonight in need.

There are many who have never heard of the Bible and of Jesus. We pray for those who are being reached for the first time and we rejoice that there are people this evening who are reading the Bible in their own language for the first time.

Bless those who translate the Bible, give the skills to them and the determination to finish their task and what must be such an arduous and such a long work which must seem as if they will never come to an end of it but we pray for their encouragement so that the whole world will know that there is not only a God, the living and true God but that he sent his son into the world to save us from our sin.

We ask, Lord, that you will bless our own witness here in Stornoway. We pray for the witness of our congregation here and other congregations here. We pray for the witness of our denomination and for every other church, Lord, that believes and loves the Bible and honours the truth of the Bible. We give thanks for it that we can rely upon its infallibility. We give thanks, O Lord, that when we open its pages we are seeing and reading the very words of God and we pray that many people will come under the power of the Holy Spirit as they read the Bible as well.

[22 : 30] So, Lord, we ask that you will come amongst each one of us, those who are here this evening and those who are not with us. We thank, O Lord, of those who are away from us at this time, who are in hospital or who are awaiting treatment, of those who are bereaved.

We remember especially the Graham family this evening. We pray that you will draw near to them in a very, very special way and, Lord, we pray that you might be their refuge and their strength in time of loss and in time of bereavement and that you will be that strength to our congregation here as once again we are reminded of the passage of time and that we are, that we will not, we will not remain in this world forever.

The day will come when we will be taken from this world. Give us to be ready for that time by listening to the gospel and by receiving Jesus as our saviour. And so, our Father in heaven, we pray that you will bless your word to us as we sing it and as we gather around it again this evening in Jesus' name.

Amen. Psalm 131, it's on page 173. It's the Sing Psalms version and it's the, it's the short meter three verses.

Psalm 131 on page 173. My heart's not proud, O Lord, nor haughty is my eye. I do not occupy myself with things too great or high.

[24 : 00] Psalm 131, three verses, the whole psalm and we're going to stand to sing. My heart's not proud, O Lord, O Lord, the haughty is my eye.

I do not occupy myself with things to pray for mine.

My spirit, my heart is crucified, my soul is like a little child, close to his mother's side.

Just like a little child, my soul is found in me, O Israel, where hope made from the Lord now and eternally.

Turn back with me to the chapter we read, 1 Samuel 25, and read again at verse 23. When Abigail saw David, she hurried, got down from the donkey and fell before David on her face and bowed to the ground.

[26 : 08] She fell at his feet and said, On me alone, my Lord, be the guilt. Please let your servant speak in your ears and hear the words of your servant. Amen. Amen. You'll possibly feel that as we work our way through chapter after chapter after chapter that tell the story of how David was continuously pursued by Saul, you might be forgiven for wondering, are we ever going to get to an end of this?

Well, if we're wondering that, how much more do you think that David wondered if he was ever going to come to an end of this relentless pursuit by Saul?

What we've seen is, and of course, we've got the benefit of hindsight. It's always great to have the benefit of hindsight, isn't it? You never see it at a time when you're in the situation, you don't understand what's going on.

David didn't understand what was going on. Only we can understand by looking back over this as the story of how God was preparing this man for the kingdom.

and that was a painful process. In fact, the Christian life is often a painful process because God is not allowing us, if you're a child of God tonight, he's not allowing you to live the way you want to live.

[27 : 38] He won't have you do that. Your life, too, is a preparation. It's a growth in which you continue to change and in which God teaches you some very important lessons and in which he works in you.

What was it? The Apostle Paul said that God works in us to will and to do of his good pleasure. The Apostle Paul also said that we are being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.

And that is painful because there are some things that God can only teach us through painful experience. You can't learn the Christian life just by reading the Bible, perfect as the Bible is.

The Christian life is not a theory. It's an experience of living and walking with God in which you take the Bible and you ask God to show you how to put it into practice.

And that's what we're doing tonight. Once again we're going to see another area in the Christian life where we are challenged and confronted with the way that we really are because that's how it was for David.

[28 : 57] Here was that point in his life where he had to be confronted with himself. We saw last time about how he learned a very important lesson which was this that you remember how of course that Saul had come into the cave to relieve himself.

David and his men were right at the back of the cave and how his men were encouraging David that this was the moment. This was how God was the work of God giving him into David's hand.

Now was his opportunity to kill him once and for all. Be done with all this pursuit. And it looked for all the world as if God had given him into his hand.

All he had to do was to walk up to him and kill him. Would have been no problem after a couple of seconds and it would have been done. And yet David knew because he stopped and because he thought and because he worked out in his own mind that this even although it appeared to make sense and even although it appeared that God had given his enemy to him that to kill him would have been wrong.

And faced with the choice of doing what was easy and convenient convenient and doing what was right. He had to do what was right even although it didn't seem to make a great deal of practical sense at the time.

[30 : 20] And that's something that is so relevant for the Christian life in every age. We have to stop and ask ourselves are we doing what is right in the eyes of God just because it is right.

There are loads of times certainly in my life anyway where we are faced with a choice of doing what is convenient and easy and what seems to make sense and you know that if you go down that road you're actually doing something that is sinful and wrong.

And if you take the other option of doing what is right in the eyes of God then it's not so comfortable and it's not so easy and it's not so convenient it's awkward and it's and yet you do it because it's right because your life is glorifying to God.

God is at the center of your life if you put God in the very first place give him the first place in your life and then God will take care of things here on end.

You have to do what's right not what's comfortable and not what's easy and even not what appears to be the providence of God.

[31 : 32] Now of course this raises all kinds of questions like I tried to bring up these some of these questions a fortnight ago and of course there's a whole discussion in the whole area of what we call providence in any case and we don't have time to I don't want to spend too much time don't want to go into the complexities of all of that that's for you to work out in the light of the scriptures in the light of the Bible in other places it's why it's so important to know your Bible to be able to gather it all together gather all the information and to come to the conclusion on the basis of its teaching as a whole there is nothing more important in your life as a Christian than to know your Bible and to read the Bible and to understand more and more of what the Bible says now this chapter is very very different because here David comes face to face with himself and this happens because God brings on again in his providence an event that is going to test David to the very brink of disaster we're going to find out that there are more of these events as time goes on but here

God takes him to the edge he takes him almost to the point where he's just about to commit a really serious crime not only against humanity but against God himself and I wonder if there were times when he sat down maybe that very evening and he sat down and he says I don't know how I managed to get so close to a catastrophe I don't know what it was within me that led me to that well it was his anger that led him that's the theme of this passage let's try and understand it a little bit in the cultural context they were in this place called the wilderness of Paran there was a man there in Maon whose business was in Carmel the man was rich notice how the writer I don't know who wrote this can't have been Samuel because Samuel had died not sure who wrote this it doesn't really matter there was a man in Maon I want you to notice how this man is described he is described only in terms of his worldly wealth and his own character which was a bad one the man was very rich he had three thousand sheep and a thousand goats he was shearing his sheep in Carmel the name of the man was Nabal which means fool so the writer wants us to know what his name was and what his name meant because as the name so was the character and the name of his wife was Abigail the woman was discerning and beautiful but the man was harsh and badly behaved he was a Calebite I'm not quite sure whether there was a connection with being a Calebite and being harsh and badly behaved I'm not sure maybe maybe there was either by way of family or by way of community I don't know and David heard in the wilderness that Nabal was shearing his sheep and there's all kinds of questions that arise there even on a human level how does a woman who is of a character a completely different character end up with a guy like this you could ask it from the other way how does a guy like this end up with a woman who seems to be the opposite to himself they are they were I suppose what you might call in modern language totally incompatible certainly in terms of the character anyway of course there was arranged marriages in those days and so on and so forth that didn't give him any excuse for his bad behavior but notice how he's described only in terms of his behavior and his riches that's all that's all he had that's all there was to his name he was a miserable wretch of a man he was a nasty piece of work a self-centered person and on the other hand he seems to have a wife that from her own words was not only discerning wise but she also seemed to be extremely astute spiritually she seemed to know when she speaks to David she seems to know exactly what God is doing in the life of David she has made it her business to find out who

David is in other words she's made it her business to find out about what God is doing in Israel because she loves the Lord that's what I believe anyway there's every evidence in Abigail to suggest that this was not only a wise woman or a discerning woman but she was wise and discerning because God was in the first place there are many people who live in homes where there is conflict where there is even violence sometimes there are people who live in homes where there are there is a dislocation of characters and that must be the most painful of experiences yet God has his people even in these difficult situations so anyway that was that's just some observations to begin with but it seems that David's men had been befriended the servants of this man

Nabal and they had protected them they had offered them protection against enemies or bandits or robbers or whatever but then David found himself in need so he sent his men and she asked them to return asked Nabal to tell his men to return the favour now I can only conclude that in those days in that culture that it was the done thing to if you showed favour between one person and another the favour was returned it was just what you did especially in Israel where they were God's people and they were all of the one family they were all related to one another they were their own flesh and blood and so if you did a favour to one then one did a favour to you and so on that's the way it goes and if you didn't if you refused then it was an insult it was a terrible thing it was an outrage and so it was that when Nabal flatly refused David on account of his own oh he made up some lame excuse about servants leaving their masters that was a piece of nonsense the bottom line was that Nabal was so selfish even although he was incredibly rich he had everything he just wasn't prepared to give away anything at all even though David's men had protected his men he wasn't prepared to acknowledge that at all and he returned kindness with a refusal with rudeness and with ingratitude and with selfishness that's the kind of person this was a person who had obviously never taken God into his thinking at all and lived for himself you know self is a terrible thing when we put ourselves first that's what sin of course that's where it begins that's where it began in the garden of Eden where Eve and

[38 : 59] Adam where they decided to replace the glory of God with themselves and decided to elevate what they wanted rather than what God said that's where it begins and that's where it continues through the ages even to today so the word got back to David and David appears to have flipped he just lost it that was it it's a moment's reaction I'm not quite sure what kind of state of mind David was in at that time I guess that having been pursued by Saul all these months day after day and living in the tension and the pressure and the stress of continuous pursuit not knowing when Saul and his men were going after you it's bound to have an effect on your character isn't it I'm sure that we can understand that

David would be tense and that he would be liable to lose his temper at times certainly I would be if that was me so it's perhaps not surprising that he reacted in this unthinking and more importantly an unprayerful respect told his men to strap on their swords to get on their horses 400 of them they were riding towards Nabal's house with the express purpose of putting him and every one of his servants to death they were not going to go through a trial they were going to just annihilate his whole empire and they could have done it easily but to have done it would have been sinful David found himself on the path of catastrophe where if he had achieved what he set out to do he would have grievously sinned against the Lord the Lord who he loved and the Lord who he obeyed and the Lord who was his shepherd he was just about to do something drastic until he was stopped I want us to think about several things in this passage I want us to think first of all number one would be this a response without prayer which is what

David how David responded is a sure sign that we're ignoring anything that God might say do you notice that how quickly David came to his response you notice it was a knee jerk reaction it was an overreaction it was a reaction that was emotional rather than reasonable and rational and more importantly it was an it was not prayerful God has given each one of us the power of reasoning of stopping and working out the choices that we make but very often the choices that we make we don't use our reasoning process we're inflamed we're ignited by our own passions and particularly in this case when it comes to anger anger is not a sin in itself by the way anger in the Bible is actually a good thing Bible tells us that God is angry and if anger was sinful in itself then for God to be angry wouldn't make any sense the Bible also tells us that there are times when we are right to be angry with an angry response if it is controlled and if it is restrained and measured and balanced it's not sinful either but you and I both know that for the most part when we get angry it is sinful because we react passionately without thinking and we before we know it we're saying things and we're doing things and we're thinking things that we know in the light of hindsight are sinful and that's the problem with anger before you know it you've you've done something and you've you've overstepped the mark you've crossed the line and you very often get into a situation where you know perfectly well you're going to have to apologize you're going to have to repent before the Lord and ask his forgive we've all been in that position at least I have and I'm quite sure that most if not everyone here tonight has been in that position we all know what anger is we all have different ways of expressing that anger for some of us it's something that that dwells deep down in our hearts and it hardly get you hardly give any expression to it at all but it's still there it takes the form

of a resentment in which you think evil thoughts and in which you you harbor bitterness against someone or something and it stays there and it dwells and it grows and it affects your character that's the problem of course with anger and so it gets a hold of you if you don't learn to control it and I speak to myself as much as anyone else for other people it just comes out right away and then of course with that kind of person he's likely to say things that he doesn't mean and do things and of course once it's out it's like that children's illustration you still have a children's illustration where you take a mirror and you have a tube of toothpaste and you show the children the mirror and the tube of toothpaste and you squeeze the tube of toothpaste and streak it over the mirror and then you say to the children can any of you put that toothpaste back in the mirror in the tube and of course the answer is no that's the way it is with the kind of person who just erupts before you know you've said something and you've done the damage and you can't take it back again you've done so you might even do something worse there's no telling what we all of us have the potential of doing things which are outrageous don't ever ever imagine that oh I couldn't do that that's beyond my capacity that's beyond my ability no it isn't any one of us tonight have the capacity of doing anything at all you name it you could do it the most outrageous deed in the world that's what frightens me about myself and that's why God had to teach David because if he gets to be king and he acts like this then he's likely to do something truly drastic God has to show David how to control himself and he has to show us as his people how to control ourselves as well and it begins when we refuse to pray or rather I should say we don't refuse no we we don't refuse to pray we just neglect to pray something happens and we react to it we don't even think about taking it to the Lord in prayer we just decide what we're going to do and we go for it that's what David did he didn't pray didn't take God into his decision he

just said to his men strap on your swords that was it it was done and dusted all he had in his mind was getting his own back getting revenge on what had happened to him all he could see was this this monster of a man that dared to refuse his men the kindness that they had after all I've done for them after all my men have done it was a complete waste of time I'm going to get my own back on him that's the way he felt and of course the problem is once you start on that road and I'm quite sure that that as this horse galloped along I don't know how many miles it was between where he was and where Nabal was I'm sure it was a good few miles anyway thankfully it was because but instead of cooling down it just made him worse and worse because the more he went the more he thought about Nabal and all that he had done to him the more he justified his own actions that's the way we are isn't it sometimes that's sinful pride that's sinful emotional reaction and the Lord tells us that Christians must not be like that we must be like Jesus because if there's one thing I know tonight it's that Jesus would not have reacted that way he says if you're somebody hits you on the one cheek then you turn to him the other also that's hard that goes against every instinct in us doesn't it every sinful instinct because somebody hits you on the cheek you want to hit them back but that's not the way it is with the Lord and with the Lord's people now the second thing and that strength me about this passage is this that we can excel in some things and yet other things let us down here's David think about this who knows how long he has been exemplary in his character hasn't he we've been looking at how David has has patiently put up with this outrageous injustice from King Saul

[48 : 45] Saul has pursued him relentlessly and sometimes like last time we saw how David how he had met with Saul and how instead of telling him what he thought about him he patiently and quietly and and and and so he was such a an example of the man of God that he was he pleaded with King Saul that he wanted to assure him more than anything else that he meant him no harm he was exemplary in his behavior and yet now with this man of lesser importance and Saul David is about to let himself down and in actual fact what he's doing to Nabal is exactly the same as what Saul was doing to him he was actually following Saul's example in putting someone in seeking to take the life of someone else that was the way it was and he was wrong he was sinful and the reason I'm saying that is because we can excel in something we can come through the most difficult times and yet a moment afterwards we could be losing your temper at the slightest little thing other things let us down we are to be aware of the danger of what we might call hot-headedness look at this look at look at the next thing verse 21 if you decide to do something sinful you can always find an explanation for it verse 21 David's talking to himself and he's justifying he's riding his horse with all his men they're galloping towards Nabal's house and inside his head he's saying this David's saying surely in vain have I guarded all this fellow has in the wilderness so nothing was missing of all that belong to him and he's returned me evil for good if you want to do something if you set out to

do something that you know is wrong you'll always find an explanation for it some kind of rational explanation that was David's rational explanation worse still it's possible to find God in it even when God is not in it verse 22 he says God do to me God do so to the enemies of David and more also by morning I leave so much as one male who belong to him you see he's taking

God's name into his decision his sinful decision and he's become so messed up and so wound up that he actually is beginning to think that God is leading and guiding him into the decision that he is taking even although that has been his decision and it has been a sinful decision we're so deceitful aren't we we really are incredibly deceitful we're so deceitful that the only answer is to pray the Lord to the Lord every day that God will keep you on the right path and keep you from being distracted and from being tempted and from veering off the straight and the narrow road that he's leading us on the fourth thing that occurs to me is this that two wrongs don't make a right there's no question was that Nabal had done wrong to David it was an outrage culturally and socially it was an outrage but what David was about to do was even worse than what Nabal had done because David was about to take away human life and sometimes you can find yourself in that situation where you try and write something which someone else has done and you end up making the situation ten times worse because two wrongs don't make a right the fifth thing that strikes me is this that you're always only one step away from destroying your witness as a Christian you're always only one step away from destroying your witness as a

Christian when you wake up in the morning when you go out to work or whatever you do you're whatever you do do you realize that people are watching you as a Christian they know not only who you are but they know what you profess and they're looking at the kind of life that you live as an example of what a Christian is the problem is that we we set out knowing that truth but we soon forget it and before you know it you're living your life and you're not realizing that other people in your family your children your husband your wife your neighbors your work colleagues they know that you're a Christian and they are looking to you they're not always looking critically at you some of them are perhaps there are some people who watch you every day and they're just wishing they're hoping for you to fall so they'll be able to point the finger and say ah there you go you say you're a Christian and we don't I don't see any evidence of it and some people are soon to point the finger aren't they quick to point the finger but there are other people who actually look at you with a huge amount of respect and who are actually interested in finding out more about the Christian life from your life now you'll never find that out you might one day find it out but chances are that you won't find it out but it's true nonetheless there were 400 men with David young men dissidents people who had left their homes and their families some some of them with baggage and I'm not talking about the actual bags that they had talking about psychological baggage with grudges with bitterness they had left disputes at home and so on they had joined David and they were looking at him and he was their example of what it meant to live for God with God at the center and he was just about to lead them all down a path of disaster in which not only he and they would be guilty of murder but they would all be guilty of sinning against God I would like you to remember tonight and I would like myself to remember that people are watching us and that we are only one step away from ruining our witness as God's people so how did all this turn around well it turned around by Abigail Abigail took matters into her own hands she did something that was utterly unheard of in that day she was a wife and wives in that culture they kept very much in the background I'm not saying that that was the way it was supposed to be I'm saying that's the way it was and she did something that was completely completely opposite to what would have been expected of at that time but here was a discerning woman and she was able to see and to reason and to perceive what was happening work out what was happening and so even although she acted out of cultural expectation in taking matters into her own hands and making decisions which were opposite to her husband's which she just didn't do in those days she had to do it because for her to sit back and to allow this disaster to happen and all the lives that would have been taken would have been far worse than her act of rebellion and insubordination and subversion god has not created us in this world to be mindless and thoughtless god has given us his word to put into practice we've often seen before that where the authorities tell you to do something that is contrary to god's word you have to say i'm sorry but i disobey

and that's what she was doing i'm sure she would have loved to have had a happy home to have had a loving husband to have had a home that honored the lord and i put him first she found herself in a situation where she had to take matters into her own hands her husband was never going to

listen to her and if she didn't act now then the situation would have been a desperate one at the end of that day she ran to david with her gifts with her food she bowed at his feet and she persuaded him this is one of the most this is one of the wisest most subtle the cleverest statements in the whole of the bible and certainly in the old testament anyway this woman obviously had thought about what she was doing she had i believe she had prayed about it there's so much of the lord in her statement she obviously worshiped the lord because he was the reason for her action and i want you to notice that david too was willing to take the four steps that were necessary to retrieve the situation the four steps were these he was willing to stop he had to stop what he was doing he had to listen to what this woman was about to say to her he had to back down and he had to leave the rest in the hands of the lord now i don't know which of these four steps is the most difficult i reckon they're all difficult i reckon they were all difficult to david and they would all every single one of them have meant for david that he must put his pride to one side no matter what he had intended to do and how utterly determined he was you know it's quite a miracle that this happened isn't it he could easily have said to her take this woman away from me get it out of my way i've decided what i'm going to do here and i'm he was a leader these men were looking to him for leadership they'd already decided what they were going to do you would not be surprised if he said look whatever this woman tells me it doesn't matter but he didn't because he recognized the voice of god intervening in providence in what he was about to do god intervenes in many ways god intervenes primarily through the bible that's why it's important to read the bible to make it your daily nourishment to live your life on the basis of the bible why is it so important as an exercise as a religious exercise no because when you open the bible you're hearing the voice of god and the voice of god speaks personally to you in your situation and it's god's intrusion it's intervention just the way it's the same way as god intervened in what david was about to do so god intervened but he'll only do that when we're listening when we're ready to listen to him and this is what marks david out as a true man of god whatever he was going to do and whatever however determined he was the fact that he was willing to stop and listen to god's voice speaking to him shows where his heart really lay the fact that he was able to stop and think about what he was saying to listen to her to recognize that this was god stepping into a disaster the fact that he was willing to back down how is that for swallowing your pride that is a christian that is a person who is prepared to say god first i don't care about myself it's not about me it's about god god must come first and if it means that i have to say i'm sorry then so be it when's the last time you've said you're sorry to someone that you know you've wronged is it not the truth is it not the fact that you know you're wrong somebody you thought well that's okay time will be the great healer that's okay i'm not going to say anything and the reason you're not saying anything is because you are not prepared to say you're sorry it's pride that's all it is i find it difficult to know how a person like that has ever come to christ in the first place if you're not prepared to say you're sorry as a christian what did you do at the beginning how did you repent surely that's what repentance is that's what god commands every one of us tonight and maybe that's the reason why you're not a christian why you haven't come to god in the first place it's not because you don't believe the bible it's because you're so filled with pride and a sense of your own self-righteousness that you refuse to countenance the possibility that you are wrong and you've been wrong all your life the more your life goes on the more difficult it is for you to say all these years i have wasted thinking that i had it right all the time and i didn't have it right that is what repentance is you carry on like that that's okay you carry on like that but one day you will be forced to appear before god's judgment seat and there'll be no repentance there'll be no forgiveness it'll be a lost eternity so god is giving you the opportunity now of standing before him and asking his forgiveness forgiveness because when you ask his forgiveness you're confessing to the mess you've made of your life for all the years that you've lived in this world but you know when you repent and when god changes your life when god puts a new heart in it you don't stop repenting you can take your whole life as a life of repentance if you're a christian tonight and you can't remember the last time you repented then there's something wrong because god teaches us how to repent not only before him but before other people teaches us that in in jesus in jesus teaching what was it what was it that that zacchaeus did when he came to the lord he went to all those he had wronged all those he had thieved money from and he repented he showed them demonstrated that he had done such wrong i want to just leave one thing with you in closing because the time has gone not only was david willing to back down but he saw things perhaps for the first time in terms of the big picture god had anointed him to be king over israel god had a bigger and a better and a greater plan for the life of david and here he is in one moment of time and he's about to spoil it all because he's

elevated this one event this one man who happens to have got under his skin and he's about to turn the whole thing on its head well now now that he's stopped now that he's listened to the voice of god now that he has backed down the final step

[65 : 37] is to leave it to the lord leave it to the lord the lord's going to take care of it what i need to do is to walk on the path that god has mapped out for me and there are countless times when we're tempted to go this way and that way and when we do we invite ruin and disaster upon ourselves and god has to pull us back and to set us on the path of righteousness establishing our ways leave it to the lord am i talking to somebody tonight that needs to stop that needs to listen that needs to back down and it needs to leave it in the hands of god let's pray our father in heaven we thank you for your word and we pray that your word will take a hold of us and that it will change us the way in which your spirit is able to to adjust our behavior and to make us to see ourselves as we really are not as we'd like to see ourselves but as we really are we pray that your spirit will guide us and and that will transform us to being more and more like the lord jesus christ in his name amen we're going to sing together in psalm number 119 and that's the scottish psalter version it's on page number 411 and it's page and it's verse number 129 we're going to sing four stanzas psalm 119 from 129 to 133 four stanzas thy statutes lord are wonderful my soul them keeps with care the entrance of thy words gives light makes wise who simple are my mouth i've wide opened and panted earnestly while after thy commandments thy word i longed exceedingly because it's only the word that can bring that healing and that change and that guidance that we so desperately need as we live for him psalm 119 verse 129 to 133 and we're going to stand to sing don't people have

My soul and peace were there. The entrance of thy works is light.

Makes my person belong. My heart, my heart, my open head, and found in earnest me.

While after life, oh, my open head, I long can see thee be.

Good on me, Lord, and merciful, do thou come to me prove?

[69 : 34] As thou art born to do to those, thy name could truly love.

For let my first steps in thy word, our rights shall order thee.

And the way in which ye obtain, dominion, oh, my.

Our Father, we pray now that you will bless our continued time of fellowship, informal fellowship in the hall next door. We pray that you will bless the food. Thank you for those who have prepared it for us.

And we pray that you will bless our discussion and our fellowship around your word. And now we ask that your grace and your mercy and your peace from Father, Son, and Holy Spirit will be ours. In Jesus' name. Amen.