

## Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 474

1 Samuel 25

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### Episode Summary

David and his men are in the wilderness of Maon when they hear that Nabal, a wealthy landowner, is shearing his sheep. David sends his men to ask Nabal for food and drink, as is customary when a guest visits. Nabal is a proud and arrogant man, and he refuses to give David anything. He insults David and his men, calling them “worthless rabble.” Abigail, Nabal’s wise and resourceful wife, learns of her husband’s behavior and takes matters into her own hands. She gathers a large amount of food and drink and sets out to meet David. Abigail arrives at David’s camp and falls on her face before him. She apologizes for her husband’s behavior and begs David not to take revenge. David is impressed by Abigail’s wisdom and humility, and he agrees to spare Nabal’s life. The next day, Nabal learns of what has happened. He is so ashamed that he has a stroke and dies ten days later. David marries Abigail and she becomes a wise and supportive wife to him.

### Transcript

**TS:** Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 474: 1 Samuel 25. I’m the layman, Trey Stricklin and he’s the scholar, Dr. Matthew Halsed. Hey, Matt! We appreciate you so much coming on to help us finish 1 Samuel. I know Mike would appreciate it. Again, I can’t thank you enough for coming on and helping us finish 1 Samuel.

**MH:** Man, thank you so much for having me back on the show. It’s a privilege to be back on the Naked Bible Podcast. I had so much fun last year (I guess it was around this time last year), getting to chat with Mike about Paul’s use of the Old Testament in Romans. That was just a ton of fun. I think we did, like, twelve episodes. I’ll always remember that. It was super-cool, and I love this audience. I’m just so appreciative to this audience. And of course, I’m very thankful and grateful for Mike and his friendship and his scholarship. Man, goodness... I think about this often, but I just love the legacy that Dr. Heiser has left us. He has left it to us all. On a professional level, I’m just so thankful for the time that he spent working on his books and the time he spent on this podcast with you and his starting the AWKNG School of Theology. He is a gift to the Kingdom. He’s still a gift to the Kingdom because his work is impacting so many people right now today, and it will for a long time. Somebody at his memorial service made the

comment that, "Mike's work on earth is done. He has completed his work. But his legacy goes on." That just captured everything, I think. Mike has a wonderful legacy that he has left. On a personal level, he was just such an encouragement to me. As a young scholar, I would ask him some questions and he was just always affirming and encouraging. I'm always going to remember that, and so I'm just thankful for the time that we had with him.

**TS:** Well, we're just thankful for you, too, and scholars such as yourself. You're carrying on the legacy that he left behind. In that same vein, I personally want to say "thank you" because now it's up to us to carry the torch forward and move the ball forward, and you're doing a great job. Again, for those folks if you want to go back and listen to Matt's series of "Paul's Use of the Old Testament," it's episode 411 to 422. We certainly appreciate you coming on, Matt, and doing that, and today for helping us cover 1 Samuel 25. I'm looking forward to it. It's all yours, sir!

**MH:** Well, thanks, man. Yeah, we're in 1 Samuel 25. I think this is going to be a great chapter. It's a pretty thick chapter, some 43 verses or so. I'm excited to do this chapter with this audience because I know this is an audience who loves in-depth content. None of us are content with superficial or surface-level stuff. We want to go deep on that, and so I admire that. And again, that's the legacy of Mike. He has trained all of us well and he has trained us to just want to go deep in the text. And this is a text where we can go deep! It's a challenging text, I think, on both a scholarly and a personal, spiritual level. So let's just dive into 1 Samuel 25.

The chapter starts off, obviously, with verse 1. It records just a brief mention about the death of Samuel. Chapter 25, verse 1 says [NRSV]:

**Now Samuel died; and all Israel assembled and mourned for him. They buried him at his home in Ramah.**

**Then David got up and went down to the wilderness of Paran.**

This is just a simple statement about the death of Samuel, but we need to let it really sink in that Samuel has been a very important figure throughout this section of scripture. He has got a unique and interesting story in and of himself, in the way he came about. From the time he was born, he lived a life that was directed by God and was permeated with the Providence of God. He was just a fascinating individual.

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So Samuel was a very important prophet and an integral player in the role and the life of Israel. His death doesn't just happen and nobody noticed, right? It's says, "All Israel assembled and mourned for him." I mean, this was an important

figure and it marks a turn in the narrative. Samuel is gone. However, the other characters are having to come along and figure things out. And of course, Saul is going to have another interaction with Samuel at some point. (That's an interesting thing in and of itself.)

Anyway, I just wanted to note that Samuel's ministry there is over and Israel is in a different situation now. The story picks up immediately after that in verse 2 about a guy named Naval [pronounced Na-VALL]—that's the Hebrew way of saying it. I'm just going to say Nabal [NAY-ble] because I'm an English speaker and it just rolls off the tongue a little bit easier. But Nabal (or Naval) is going to come on the scene. He's an interesting fellow. I want to start off by reading verses 2 and 3.

**<sup>2</sup> There was a man in Maon, whose property was in Carmel. The man was very rich; he had three thousand sheep and a thousand goats. He was shearing his sheep in Carmel. <sup>3</sup> Now the name of the man was Nabal, and the name of his wife Abigail. The woman was clever and beautiful, but the man was surly and mean; he was a Calebite.**

Now, that phrase, "the man was surly and mean..." The word "surly" is *qasheh* and it denotes the idea of being a hard or difficult or severe type of person. This man, Nabal, was just very difficult to be around, as we'll see in just a moment. The translation is that he was surly and mean—difficult and mean. I think that's a fine translation. In Hebrew, "mean" has the idea of being evil in his actions or something to that effect. Here, the word "evil" is *rah*. It's used as a qualifier of the sort of life he's living. This word does mean "evil," but it's slightly thicker than that. It denotes the idea of destruction. It denotes the idea of calamity or a troubled state of affairs. I think this definitely captures Nabal's spiritual situation. His heart, for whatever reason, is not in a good place. I think we're going to see that on full display whenever he encounters David in this brief episode.

Let's just jump into that. Let's talk about the time when Nabal deals with David. It's fascinating. Let me read a decent portion (verses 4-11). I want to read the whole thing so that we get the full context. It says this, starting in verse 4:

**<sup>4</sup> David heard in the wilderness that Nabal was shearing his sheep. <sup>5</sup> So David sent ten young men; and David said to the young men, 'Go up to Carmel, and go to Nabal, and greet him in my name. <sup>6</sup> Thus you shall salute him: "Peace be to you, and peace be to your house, and peace be to all that you have. <sup>7</sup> I hear that you have shearers; now your shepherds have been with us, and we did them no harm, and they missed nothing, all the time they were in Carmel. <sup>8</sup> Ask your young men, and they will tell you. Therefore let my young men find**

**favour in your sight; for we have come on a feast day. Please give whatever you have at hand to your servants and to your son David.”**

**<sup>9</sup> When David’s young men came, they said all this to Nabal in the name of David; and then they waited. <sup>10</sup> But Nabal answered David’s servants, ‘Who is David? Who is the son of Jesse? There are many servants today who are breaking away from their masters. <sup>11</sup> Shall I take my bread and my water and the meat that I have butchered for my shearers, and give it to men who come from I do not know where?’**

So Nabal is dealing quite harshly with David and his men. Nabal seems to think that David is just a vagabond almost, right? He doesn't want to help him out at all. Apparently, this is how Nabal treated everybody, so don't think he just doesn't like David. I just don't think he likes anybody.

But there's one thing that's very important here. Notice how David requested... He did it by invoking peace. His request is blanketed initially in peace. For example, David tells Nabal, "*Shalom* be to you, and *shalom* be to your house, and *shalom* be to all that you have." In other words, "Peace to you and everything that you have. Peace to you." That's how David's men requested—

10:00 they started off very gently and they started off with peace.

Let me just say a few words about that. The idea of peace (*shalom* in Hebrew) is not the idea of just peace in the sense of absence of conflict. It's also the idea of fullness and completeness. In other words, to have *shalom* is to have everything that you need. It's to lack nothing. And David is wishing *shalom* upon Nabal. But Nabal's response to David's *shalom* is pretty unfortunate. To put it simply, Nabal acts very consistently with the character that the text has said that he has. He truly is a man who is difficult and evil—*qasheh* and *rah*. He is difficult and evil.

So notice here the literary structure of the story. The literary structure of the story is such that the reader has been set up to see two very different ways of living life. On the one hand, we have Nabal, who is harsh and evil. On the other hand, we have David, who comes in peace. Whereas Nabal seeks to increase David's calamity, David seeks to increase Nabal's *shalom*. So the narrative sets up two different poles, right? Two different ways of being human. It raises an interesting question for those of us who call ourselves Christians, actually. I think this is a very important point to make. The question here is, what sort of people are we going to be like? Are we going to be like Nabal or are we going to be like David? Are we going to be a people of peace or a people who sucks peace out of the lives of other people? I guess another way to put it is we could say, "Are we going to be a people who seeks the welfare or the *shalom* of other people or will we disregard the well-being of our neighbor, just like Nabal?" I think these

questions are not... It's obvious, okay? These questions are not in the text explicitly. But make no mistake about it, they are loud and clear in the story.

Anyway, I just wanted to toss this out there because I think these questions are important for us as Christians to ask. So just file them away, put them in the back of your heart, and maybe you can come back later for further prayer and contemplation about that. But I wanted to bring that up because I think the narrative sets up David and Nabal as two different figures who choose different ways of living and different moralities, if you will.

So David initially extends *shalom* to Nabal, but how does he respond when he hears Nabal's response back? Let's read the next two verses. Verses 12-13 (after they heard the response):

**<sup>12</sup> So David's young men turned away, and came back and told him all this. <sup>13</sup> David said to his men, 'Every man strap on his sword!' And every one of them strapped on his sword; David also strapped on his sword; and about four hundred men went up after David, while two hundred remained with the baggage.**

[laughs] This is hilarious. Things certainly do take a turn for the worse, right? David starts off with *shalom*, Nabal responds with *rah* (evil), and then David reacts to that with war. Like he wants to kill him, right? [laughs] This is interesting to me. It actually reminds me of something my pastor said one time in a sermon. This is my paraphrase of it (I don't quite remember the exact quote). It goes like this: "It's easy to *act* like a Christian. It's difficult to *react* like a Christian." Let me repeat that: "It's easy to act like a Christian, but it's difficult to react like a Christian." Just like David, we start off our day so well, don't we? We start off with peace and *shalom*. We maybe start our day with prayer and scripture. But then we encounter difficult people at work, at school, at the cafe, on the highway (definitely on the highway, right?). And David is like that. He's angry. And it's okay to be angry, but to be so angry to start a war? To commit murder? I think it's clear here that David has allowed his own heart to succumb to the darkness that he's experienced at the hand of Nabal. I think that happens a lot. Evil is contagious. Hatred is a virus, but so is goodness and wisdom. I think those things are contagious too. And it's at this point that we meet Nabal's wife. Her name is Abigail. Let's read about Abigail in verses 14-17. It says:

**<sup>14</sup> But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, 'David sent messengers out of the wilderness to salute our master; and he shouted insults at them. <sup>15</sup> Yet the men were very good to us, and we suffered no harm, and we never missed anything when we were in the fields, as long as we were with them; <sup>16</sup> they were a wall to us both by night and by day, all the while we were**

**with them keeping the sheep. <sup>17</sup> Now therefore know this and consider what you should do; for evil has been decided against our master and against all his house; he is so ill-natured that no one can speak to him.'**

So here the servant that goes to Abigail recognizes that David and his men are about to bring *rah* or calamity and destruction and evil against them because of how Nabal just treated them. So this servant sought out the wise and good Abigail to intervene because he knows her heart; she's a good person. Let's actually read on to this next section. It's an extended section, but it's super good and I think it's worth reading the passage in its entirety. I'll actually make some pauses as I'm reading because I want to make some comments along the way that I think are important. Let's first start with verses 18-22 and see how the story proceeds. It says next:

**<sup>18</sup> Then Abigail hurried and took two hundred loaves, two skins of wine, five sheep ready dressed, five measures of parched grain, one hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs. She loaded them on donkeys <sup>19</sup> and said to her young men, 'Go on ahead of me; I am coming after you.' But she did not tell her husband Nabal. <sup>20</sup> As she rode on the donkey and came down under cover of the mountain, David and his men came down towards her; and she met them. <sup>21</sup> Now David had said, 'Surely it was in vain that I protected all that this fellow has in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that belonged to him; but he has returned me evil for good. <sup>22</sup> God do so to David and more also, if by morning I leave as much as one male of all who belong to him.'**

So let's just take a pause here for a moment. Notice here the state of David's own heart. Despite the good that David feels he has extended to Nabal, Nabal has returned evil for that good. David's understandably upset. We're all frustrated by this sort of thing and when these things happen. But the problem is that David's goodness appears conditioned. It's conditional, I guess you could say, because it seems that David is acting because he doesn't feel he's gotten anything good in return. He's acting evil here. He's wanting to bring calamity on Nabal because he feels like Nabal has taken the good that he's been given and returned it back unfairly into evil. So on the one hand, I guess David's feelings here are understandable. We all operate on this level. When we do good to somebody, it's really shocking when they don't return it back when they have the opportunity. We know that to love our neighbor as ourselves is an important commandment because love is an important need for all of us—for our neighbor and for us, too. So when we don't receive that back, it's very disheartening. But for David, it's more than disheartening, it's darkening. And by that I mean that this evil that he has been given by Nabal has darkened his own heart, such that



David can't imagine not treating Nabal with the same evil that he's been treated with. But this is problematic, right? I mean, it just contributes to the chaos. All David is doing is contributing to the chaos. And as Christians, as followers of the Lamb, we need to work hard at sucking the heat out of the fire, not adding fuel to it. That's just a comment I wanted to make there. But let's keep reading, starting at verse 23. It says:

**<sup>23</sup> When Abigail saw David, she hurried and alighted from the donkey, and fell before David on her face, bowing to the ground. <sup>24</sup> She fell at his feet and said, 'Upon me alone, my lord, be the guilt; please let your servant speak in your ears, and hear the words of your servant. <sup>25</sup> My lord, do not take seriously this ill-natured fellow Nabal; for as his name is, so is he; Nabal is his name, and folly is with him; but I, your servant, did not see the young men of my lord, whom you sent.**

**<sup>26</sup> 'Now then, my lord, as the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, since the LORD has restrained you from blood-guilt and from taking vengeance with your own hand, now let your enemies and those who seek to do evil to my lord be like Nabal. <sup>27</sup> And now let this present that your servant has brought to my lord be given to the young men who follow my lord. <sup>28</sup> 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 as long as you live. <sup>29</sup> If anyone should rise up to pursue you and to seek your life, the life of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of the living under the care of the LORD your God; but the lives of your enemies he shall sling out as from the hollow of a sling. <sup>30</sup> 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, <sup>31</sup> my lord shall have no cause of grief, or pangs of conscience, for having shed blood without cause or for having saved himself. And when the LORD has dealt well with my lord, then remember your servant.'**

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Okay, so this is a thick passage. So many things here could be said, but I guess our time only really permits two brief things—two very important things. Did you notice how Abigail intercedes on behalf of her wicked husband? Notice how she said, "Please forgive the trespass of your servant." She's asking David to forgive Nabal. Now, clearly Nabal doesn't deserve this. But Abigail knows that this is the right prayer to pray. She's saying, "Don't bring harm upon him, David, let God deal with him." I just want to bring that out. Abigail is showing us what intercession looks like. She's bridging the gap. She's filling up the empty space

between two warring parties and she's saying, "Let's just let God deal with this. Don't act unjustly, David." So that's the first thing.

The second thing is, notice how she intercedes on behalf of David. Let's stop here for just a moment. We just read that Abigail intercedes on behalf of Nabal, but she also (and we have to see this) intercedes on behalf of David himself. In that section we just read, she reminds David that God will surely reward David with a dynasty. He'll give him a kingdom. And in a sense, she's saying, "Look, David, don't mess with this crazy guy, Nabal—my crazy husband. You've got bigger, better things to do." She essentially tells David, "Look, don't play around with this evil. Leave it alone and carry on with the goodness that God has given you. Carry on with the mission, carry on with the calling... God's got great things in store for you. Don't dabble in this muck or this mess." And in a real sense, she's interceding for David. She's saying, "Don't do this. Don't jump into this mess." I think this is a key observation in this narrative. In this story, remember, you have David and Nabal squaring off in a battle. It's a battle between virtue and vice. David brings peace, Nabal returns with calamity. David brings *shalom*, Nabal brings *rah*—evil. But then David reacts with a real threat of adding to the calamity. David reacts. He *acts* well, but then he *reacts* with more calamity. He wants to bring evil to Nabal. And even though initially, the reader is left to think that David and Nabal are two different types of people, in the end they look a lot alike. Even David himself was going to wield the sword of evil against Nabal.

But Abigail... Now she's the hero. Abigail (the hero that she is), she intercedes for both of these hot-tempered fellows. I think that's a way to see it here. I think Nabal is clearly hot-tempered. He's angry at life, right? He doesn't seem to be a happy guy. David is hot-tempered here, too. He gets insulted and he experiences something truly unfortunate, but then he's like, "Okay, let's go kill!" David and Nabal (in this story, at least) look a lot alike. But thankfully we have Abigail to intercede for both.

Now look, I'm not suggesting that Nabal and David are on the same spiritual plane, okay? Truly they are very different people. And yet in another sense, we can't be blinded to the fact that David, just like Nabal, is a son of Adam. And as a son of Adam, he's going to fall, too. He's going to sin; he's going to fail. Every human fails and every human needs an intercessor. And come to think of it, this story is coming to sound a lot like another story told in the New Testament. And maybe this story is just a sub-story of the larger narrative of scripture. You know the narrative of scripture. It's about fallen people needing someone to step in and stop the evil. We need someone who would be willing to place their life at risk to intercede on our behalf. That's the gospel story! And so let's just let that story echo and reverberate as we soak up this story between David, Nabal, and Abigail.



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So after Abigail speaks, David responds. And his response to Abigail is much better than his response to Nabal. So here's what David says, starting at verse 32:

**<sup>32</sup> David said to Abigail, 'Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who sent you to meet me today! <sup>33</sup> Blessed be your good sense, and blessed be you, who have kept me today from blood-guilt and from avenging myself by my own hand! <sup>34</sup> For 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 would not have been left to Nabal as much as one male.' <sup>35</sup> Then David received from her hand what she had brought him; he said to her, 'Go up to your house in peace; see, I have heeded your voice, and I have granted your petition.'**

Okay, so notice how David interprets this situation. He interprets this event as a divine appointment. He knows. He knows that God has sent Abigail to him to keep him from falling into evil. Here David responds the way he should have at the beginning. He says to Abigail, "Go up to your house in *shalom*." He should have done that the first time with Nabal, but he doesn't. At least here, he said no to *rah*—he said no to evil—and said, "I'm not going to bring further calamity; let's just live a life of peace here." This is the appropriate response. It really took Abigail's intercession to inspire him to make that appropriate response. But again, David interprets this as a divine appointment. It's not Abigail, it's God—it's Yahweh, the God of Israel—who sent Abigail to him.

So that's where we're at. Now let's look at how the whole story ends. We'll make some comments about this ending because I think it's pretty interesting. Before we get into the last section of the text, I want you to notice something very, very important. I think we need to pay very close attention to the way in which God judges Nabal. He does judge Nabal. God does bring judgment. And I know it's not always fashionable to say there is such a thing as judgment. And I get that, okay? But at the end of the day, we cannot dismiss the fact that in scripture, there is going to be judgment. There is judgment. But what we need to do is carefully consider and reflect upon the way that God brings judgment. So we're not going to question *if* there is judgment, we just want to look at the way God *does* bring judgment. In other words, we don't need to debate that there is judgment, but we need to think about the way judgment works. And I think this final text of this story... I think it will go a long way in shedding some light on that question. And I think the question is worth asking.

Now hear me out, I'm not going to build an entire theology of divine judgment on just this passage. That would be irresponsible. But I do think that this one passage could get our gears turning in the right direction so that we think better

about the way God brings judgment upon people who reject him. So let's look at verses 36-38. Pay very close attention this text. It says:

**<sup>36</sup> Abigail came to Nabal; he was holding a feast in his house, like the feast of a king. Nabal's heart was merry within him, for he was very drunk; so she told him nothing at all until the morning light. <sup>37</sup> In the morning, when the wine had gone out of Nabal, his wife told him these things, and his heart died within him; he became like a stone. <sup>38</sup> About ten days later the LORD struck Nabal, and he died.**

Did you catch that? After Nabal got over his drunkenness, the text says that Abigail "told him these things." And then "his heart died within him." So we have to ask a question: What are the "these things" that she told him? We can only speculate, I suppose, but I think it's safe to say that the things Abigail told Nabal was how even though David had initially planned to destroy Nabal, David nonetheless backtracked and decided to extend *shalom*. It's at that point when Abigail told Nabal those things, the text says "his heart died within him and he became like a stone." He becomes comatose, I guess. And then, according to the text, he died later at the determination of the Lord.

30:00 Okay, so if my exegesis is correct here (and I think the way I'm reading it has some merit to it), it's interesting to me that this news of David's peace and *shalom* and goodness... It's interesting that this news of David's *shalom* actually served to be the agent of Nabal's demise. What was it about this news that struck at the heart of Nabal's soul? I'm not sure how that worked, but something hit him. And it kind of reminds me of something C.S. Lewis said a long time ago. This comes from his book, *Mere Christianity*. Listen very carefully to this quote. He says:

God is the only comfort, He is also the supreme terror: the thing we most need and the thing we most want to hide from. He is our only possible ally, and we have made ourselves His enemies. Some people talk as if meeting the gaze of absolute goodness would be fun. They need to think again. They are still only playing with religion. Goodness is either the great safety or the great danger - according to the way you react to it. And we have reacted the wrong way.

I think this quote from C.S. Lewis is very helpful, especially for this passage. Perhaps Nabal's character was such that it could not handle the sort of goodness that God is. You see, some people are so full of darkness that to stare in the gaze of absolute light is to experience something painful—something piercing. To experience the *shalom* of God (the love of God, the light of God) could be something very painful to some people who are full of darkness.

Now let's finish this episode by reading the last five verses. It says this, starting in verse 39:

**<sup>39</sup> When David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, 'Blessed be the LORD who has judged the case of Nabal's insult to me, and has kept back his servant from evil; the LORD has returned the evildoing of Nabal upon his own head.' Then David sent and wooed Abigail, to make her his wife. <sup>40</sup> When David's servants came to Abigail at Carmel, they said to her, 'David has sent us to you to take you to him as his wife.' <sup>41</sup> She rose and bowed down, with her face to the ground, and said, 'Your servant is a slave to wash the feet of the servants of my lord.' <sup>42</sup> Abigail got up hurriedly and rode away on a donkey; her five maids attended her. She went after the messengers of David and became his wife. <sup>43</sup> David also married Ahinoam of Jezreel; both of them became his wives. <sup>44</sup> Saul had given his daughter Michal, David's wife, to Palti son of Laish, who was from Gallim.**

Okay. Never mind how we interpret the story of David and Nabal and Abigail. Never mind our interpretation of it. I'm interested in David's interpretation of it. Did you notice in that text I just read how David interprets Nabal's death? He said that David himself has been kept back from doing evil by God. So David says that he has been kept back from doing evil by an act of God. But the way in which Nabal was judged was by God allowing Nabal's own evil to "return upon his own head." That's what David said—that Nabal died by God just letting the evil return upon Nabal's own head. So in other words, technically, God didn't have to do anything to judge Nabal. He just let Nabal's soul solidify into the evil that Nabal freely wanted for himself. And once that happens, the sin and the evil that Nabal gave his life over to has become in and of itself the judgment that he would later experience. In other words, there seems to be an inherent relationship between the evil that Nabal did all throughout his life and the evil (or the death) that came upon him at the end of his life. All that God had to do was simply allow the evil to develop fully and then overtake him.

In the book of James, we see this idea very clearly. In James 1:15, it says:

**<sup>15</sup> then, when that desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and that sin, when it is fully grown, gives birth to death.**

James is a very devout Jewish man and he thinks like a Jew. He is well acquainted with this idea that there is an inherent relationship between sin and death. Some scholars have talked about this a lot. I think there's a lot of merit in seeing an inherent relationship between sin and punishment or sin and judgment—sin and death. Anyway, in a sense, when God judges, all he has to do

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is let sin be sin. Technically, he doesn't do much in the act of judgment, at least not in the way that we often think. God simply withdraws his protective grace and he lets people have their own way. God didn't bring judgement upon Nabal because God is mean. No, not at all. God brought judgment upon Nabal by showing Nabal *shalom* and peace and goodness and truth. Those things (peace, goodness, and *shalom*—truth) prove to be a very bad experience for Nabal. Again, not because God is mean but because Nabal freely chose a life that was inconsistent with the reality of God. When Nabal came face to face with the reality of God's ways (with peace, with goodness), that pierced his soul and his own sin became a prison of sorts. Again, it reminds me of something C.S. Lewis said a long time ago. He said:

Hell is locked from the inside.

I think that's a very important, insightful thing to say. The only reason why David didn't fall into the same evil is because David's response to the *shalom* of God was different from Nabal's response to the *shalom* of God. When Abigail invited David into a life of *shalom*, David accepted it. For all of David's faults... and you know this, trust me, there were many of them, right? David has many faults. But for all of David's faults, he at least here shows himself to be a man after God's own heart. That's not the case in every situation that David finds himself in. I get that. He sins very badly in other parts of the scriptures, so I'm not trying to idolize a very frail man here. I'm simply trying to show that, just like C.S. Lewis said a long time ago, the way we react to God's message, the way we respond to God's invitations of grace and peace, those will impact the choices we make later down the road. The small choices that we make in life lead us to form habits, and habits shape our character over time, and character cements us into a certain way of living. I think that's what we see in Nabal. He lived his whole life being difficult, being evil. And over time he solidified his own soul. His own character became cemented in that way of life, such that when he met the peace of God through David (the *shalom*), it just did him in.

There's a ton more I want to say about this. We could get into questions about free will and God's sovereignty and all of that. And for the record, I do believe God has given us free will. I'm actually not a Calvinist. I'm friends with Calvinists, so it's not a big deal to me who is or isn't. I'm just not a Calvinist. But all of those conversations are just simply discussions for another day. So I just want to point out here that as we choose the decisions that we make and as we go about our lives, be very careful how we choose because those will lock us in sometimes to a character habit that is very detrimental and even deadly down the road.

Okay, we'll put all that aside. Those are conversations for another day. To close shop today on this episode, I think the takeaway is very simple. There are just three takeaways. Number one, there seems to be an inherent relationship between sin and death. Number two, it seems that when God judges, he just lets

people have their way with sin and he just lets their sin reap into destruction, if that's what people freely choose. And number three, let's ask God to help us to be a people of peace—a people who live a life of shalom.

**TS:** Hey, Matt, what translation are you reading from?

**MH:** Good question. New Revised Standard version.

**TS:** Okay. Is there a reason why you like that one over the others?

**MH:** You know, I try to keep a pretty eclectic approach. I got the New Revised Standard Version for a couple reasons. One, this Bible that I use (the hard copy) has the Apocrypha in it and I teach Jewish backgrounds of the New Testament, which details a lot of the Apocryphal writings and Second Temple Jewish writings. And I just needed a good text for that copy. That's one reason, but the second reason is I just like the way the New Revised Standard Version translates some things. That's not to say that it's a perfect translation because I actually find myself disagreeing with it a lot of times. When I do disagree with the NRSV, I jump to the ESV (English Standard Version) and I like many of the things the ESV does where the NRSV gets it wrong. But then there are lots of things the ESV does where I'm like, "Ah, don't do that!" So then I jump to the NRSV. So I really kind of use both. I use ESV and NRSV, but primarily the New Revised Standard Version.

**TS:** All right. Well, we appreciate you so much coming on and joining us today. We're going to have you later on, as well, so we look forward to that. Again, I want to thank Dr. Halsted for coming on today and helping us with 1 Samuel chapter 25, and I want to thank everybody else for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God bless.