

Ephesians 15-02-15b

We pick up our study in Ephesians chapter 5 via 1 Samuel chapter 25 where we're looking at a comparison and contrast to the Ananias and Sapphira study we did the past few weeks because all of these things help to illustrate and illuminate our understanding of what it means to be faithful and obedient in the area of authority, both exercising authority and submitting to and functioning under authority. This is one of the key elements of our lives before God is recognizing where He has placed these responsibilities for us, where the opportunities are, what the accountability is, when we should and should not obey. And this becomes pertinent, what's going to happen as the agenda driven changes to our laws and the function in our culture continues in a non-biblical amoral direction? Will there come a time when we have to make decisions about whether or not to obey the laws of this country because we can no longer do so in good conscience in the Lord? Now there are people who abuse this idea and say I'm not going to pay my taxes, I think it's unbiblical, I'm not going to obey this law or that law because it's unbiblical.

We want to be sure that we are on solid ground if and when we depart because Scripture itself says to obey those that have the rule over you. Of course that's talking more about church authority. Fear God, honor the King.

We are to, as far as it is within our control, to live peaceably with all men. We are to not let our good be spoken of as evil and we have a strong responsibility to be law abiding and obedient as far as it is within our power. When do we, like the founding fathers, decide that the King has gone too far and we have to get out from under his authority and establish a new authority? When does a wife decide that she needs to remove herself and perhaps her children from the authority of an abusive husband and father and establish a new paradigm, a separate existence? This does happen.

It needs to happen. The trick is figuring out when and how. So we are looking at these episodes to see if we can glean some guidance from the examples that are given.

So Ananias willfully deciding that he is going to compromise his responsibility to God in provision for fellow believers. Everything he has is something he has received through the providence and the grace of God and when it is time for him as a steward of those possessions of God to reallocate them in a way that blesses God's people, he defaults, he compromises, he splits and only brings part. This is the heart of the sin.

It isn't that he said it was sold for less than it really was. It is that he divided it in the first place. He brought less than God intended him to bring.

This is a prompting of the Holy Spirit and he is false to that guidance. He is false to that witness. He is false to that opportunity and this is the grounds for discipline.

His wife follows him in it, agrees with him in it and she suffers the same judgment. On the other

hand in chapter 25 of 1 Samuel we have Nabal who has the opportunity to make provision for David and his men who are fugitives from an abusive authority, who are wrongly accused, wrongly hounded, wrongly under threat of their lives from a fallen and now evil King Saul who himself has been partial and disobedient just a few chapters earlier in failing to annihilate the Amalekites as God instructed him. Instead he spares Agag and spares a lot of the animals and people.

These people are going to come back and be a thorn in the side of Israel for many years to come. It will not be until David defeats the last of them that they cease to be raiders coming across the border down in the area of Carmel and the Negev. Instead of being fully obedient Saul sets up a big monument to himself at this very spot in Carmel near Maon, the habitation of Nabal.

Nabal may have even been a witness to these events. It is within the relatively short time of the kingship of Saul that all of these things take place. So when David after providing security, protecting and initiating Nabal to have this wonderful time of shearing, this wonderful feast day, this wonderful celebration of prosperity and great abundance, David requests that his men be guests at the feast and be able to partake and have a reward for their faithful labors over many months.

And Nabal says no. Nabal in verse 10 of chapter 25, 1 Samuel answered David's servants, these ten men, who is David and who is the son of Jesse? There are many servants nowadays who break away each one from his master. You are Ronin.

You are samurai without a lord. There is something wrong with you. This is an ad hominem response.

You're disloyal. You've broken away from the king. Why should I help you? This tells us a couple of things about Nabal.

When he says, who is David? Who is the son of Jesse? How does he know he's the son of Jesse? Because he knows who David is. He gives himself away in the very act of claiming he doesn't know who he is. What he's really saying is, of what importance are you? Why should I pay any attention to you? You're a fugitive from the king and I choose at this point, because it is to my advantage, to recognize the authority of the king.

Now I didn't choose to recognize the authority of the king and turn you in when you were providing me a benefit, protecting my men, protecting my flocks for all these many months. But now that it suits my purpose, I treat you as a heathen and a tax collector and I pretend I have no knowledge of you. This is entirely acting out of selfishness.

Shall I take my bread, verse 11, and my water and my meat that I have killed for my shearers, and give it to men who I do not know where they are from? You get the idea that Ananias and Sapphira might have been talking late at night after they made this decision to keep back part of

the proceeds of the land they sold and say, you know, I don't even know some of these people and I wonder why they're not out getting a job and working. You know, why should we take the entire proceeds of this land that belongs to us and donate it to them? I don't even know who some of these people are. I think we ought to keep some of it.

We know who we are. We know what we want. I think we ought to keep it for ourselves.

And they are no doubt rationalized and it made sense, you know, well, two of us are agreeing on earth. This must be the right thing. So, David's young men, verse 12, turned on their heels.

This is a, they could have just said they turned, but when it says they turned on their heels, this is, this is disgust. This is disappointment. This is an expression of great consternation here.

They turned on their heels and went back and they came and told David all these words. So David said to his men, every man gird on his sword. So every man girded on his sword.

David also girded on his sword and about 400 men went with David and 200 stayed with the supplies. So there is an armed party of judgment on the way to Nabal. Now, one of the young men told Abigail, this is one of Nabal's young men.

He is present when Nabal refuses any recognition or any appreciation to the men of David. He witnesses this scene and he knows that Abigail needs to know this information. Now, this is a servant of Nabal.

He works for Nabal. He is one of Nabal's young men. So how loyal is it for him to go tell Abigail what Nabal has done? He makes a decision to go see Abigail and this could be viewed, you could imagine Nabal might take him to task if he were to come to knowledge of it.

But the servant has to make a decision. This is important information and violence and bloodshed are about to ensue because this guy has spent the whole season with David's men. He knows what is going to happen.

He knows what these men are capable of and he knows what an injustice this is and what righteous indignation will produce. He sees a situation where he needs to operate on his best judgment and that means go tell the lady of the house. So one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, and this guy is unsung, unnamed, unnoticed most of the time but everything hinges on this young man.

What if he does not speak up? What if Abigail does not find out until the raiding party has slaughtered everyone? This servant is a key. He is a minor, nameless one of the young men but perhaps prompted by the Holy Spirit he recognizes that there is a need for the truth to be spoken to someone who will act on the truth and he goes and tells Abigail. Everything pivots on this guy.

He does not talk, slaughter ensues. David has an entirely different history that we will be reading

about in the Bible. But he does, he says, 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, lose, anything as long as we were accompanied by them when we were in the fields. They were a wall to us both by night and by day all the time we were with them keeping the sheep. Now therefore know and consider what you will do for harm is determined against our master and against all his household.

You know how he knows this? He saw the men turn on their heel and he knows what that means. He knows these men. He knows the look in their eye.

He knows their master David and he knows exactly what is going to happen when they return and give their report of the stinginess, the selfishness and the reviling nature of Nabal. And the he is a scoundrel. One cannot speak to him.

The servant knows that trying to warn Nabal you think well why doesn't he go to Nabal and say look you know these guys are going to come back and wreak havoc on us. But he knows that Nabal will not listen. Nabal is the kind of authority that will not accept feedback, will not listen to reason.

He is headstrong, self-centered, selfish and he says there is no talking to him. He is such a son of Belial is what it literally says. He is a son of Belial and cannot be spoken to, cannot speak to him.

Now look at what Abigail does. Abigail said well this is my husband's decision and he is the authority, he is the head of the house so there is nothing I can do. I agree with him.

Why should we divide the spoil and give it to these guys? If they decided to do security that is on them. We never made them any promises. I have no contract.

Let them take us to court if they think they have a case. What does she do? Abigail made haste and took two hundred loaves of bread, two skins of wine, five sheep already dressed, five sieves of roasted grain, one hundred clusters of raisins and two hundred cakes of figs and loaded them on donkeys. Now you know how I know this is not the time of harvest? Look at these items that she packs.

She doesn't take grain, she takes bread. She takes skins of wine, this is grape juice that has time to ferment, right? Didn't come from freshly pressed grapes. She takes sheep already dressed, five sieves of roasted grain, this is grain that has been roasted so that it will keep.

She takes a hundred clusters of grapes, raisins. Why raisins? Don't have any fresh grapes. This is not the time of reaping, this is the spring.

This is a different time of year. Two hundred cakes of figs. We talked Friday night about

sycamore figs and about Amos' role in tending them, perhaps piercing them or doing something to ensure that they produce abundantly.

Well, these are cakes of figs. Again, these are not fresh figs. These are dried figs.

They are pressed into lumps or cakes. We are going to see this not far in the future when we look at Hezekiah and he's got a severe boil and he's dying of an infection. And Isaiah is going to say get a lump and press it on there.

This is a lump of figs. It's a fig lump. It's a homeopathic remedy.

But she loads this 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. She does not agree with him.

She does not decide that his authority trumps truth and trumps righteousness. So it was that she wrote 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 it's hard to know exactly what happened here because what I would expect is she sent the young men ahead of her.

She said to her servants, her servants, go on before me. Try to catch them as early as you can. And she is following with the gifts.

But she says, look, go ahead and tell David to please wait until I get there. But we don't see these servants anymore. Evidently they took the high road and headed for David's camp.

David has already left the camp with his men and he is in defilade. He is getting ready to attack. And Abigail taking the slower road with these donkeys and these gifts actually meets him not where she was expecting.

She tells her guys, you take the quick road and go to his camp and tell him to wait. And then she is taking the standard road which would probably go down through the valley and as she comes around the hill there is David and his men waiting. They are just doing their recon getting ready to spring in and slaughter everyone.

And so she runs right into them. The servants apparently missed him. So under the cover of the hill there is David and his men coming down toward her and she met them.

And David doesn't know anything at this point. He didn't say, well, I just talked to your servants and I know what's up. David had said surely in vain have I protected all that this fellow has in the wilderness so that nothing was missed of all that belongs to him and he has repaid me evil for good.

How many times have we been told this now? How many times have we been told this? David sends his young men, right? And we are told initially that your shepherds were with us, verse 7,

we did not hurt them nor was there anything missing from all that you had in Carmel. Ask your young men and they will tell you. That's the first time.

But Nabal doesn't want to listen. So then the servant goes to Abigail in verse 14 and says, look, David sent messengers, the men were good to us, verse 15, we were not hurt nor did we miss anything. This is the second time we are told of David's faithfulness and generosity toward Nabal and his men.

And now we are getting it a third time. Surely in vain I have protected all that this fellow has. Kind of like the threefold statement of what happened with Ananias and Sapphira in withholding what God had prompted them to give for the provision and benefit of believers in that church.

Nothing was missed of all that belonged to him. 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, is David reacting righteously or improperly here? If he is going to slaughter all the males that belonged to Nabal, who does this include? All of the guys that he has protected all season long. One of whom is the guy that went to Abigail and said, look, I know the path of righteousness here and this isn't right and you need to know we need to do something. He risks himself, puts himself at risk to talk to Abigail.

This is one of the guys David is about to go kill. He says, I'm just going to slaughter everything that belongs to Nabal. There won't be a male alive.

Well, these are the young men that have been mentioned two previous times. Now, when Abigail saw David, she dismounted quickly from the donkey, fell on her face before David and bowed down to the ground. What is this? This is a subservient attitude.

This is the attitude of someone who recognizes an authority, right? If you bow yourself down to the ground, what are you saying? You are my master. I am your servant. So, what has Abigail done here? She dismounted from the donkey.

She didn't go to Nabal and bow down at his feet and say, oh, husband, please don't do this foolish thing. She recognizes a different authority and it's David. She fell at his feet and said, on me, my Lord, on me, let this iniquity be.

Is any of this her fault? She is taking responsibility on behalf of the household, on behalf of her husband, when the responsibility is actually her husband's. But she no longer recognizes his authority and that makes her the authority. She is having to make decisions on the behalf of the household, right? If she abnegates, if she does not recognize Nabal's authority, she's the authority.

If she's the authority, then she's also responsible. And so, having assumed the authority for the

household, she also accepts responsibility and she says, on me, be this. What she is actually saying is, I am now acting as the responsible party and the authority for this household and all of these young men.

I have superseded my husband. That's why she says, on me, be this iniquity, because when you take the authority, you also take the responsibility. You can delegate authority, but you can't delegate responsibility.

She's responsible because she has stepped in as the authority. Please let your maidservant speak in your ears. Your maidservant, my Lord, falling at his feet.

These are all acknowledgements of David's authority. Hear the words of your maidservant. Let your maidservant speak in your ears.

Hear the words of your maidservant. Please let not my Lord regard this scoundrel Nabal, for as his name, so he is. Nabal is his name and folly is with him.

But I, your maidservant, did not see the young men of my Lord whom you sent. So, although she is accepting responsibility, she also lets David know that this all took place without her knowledge. She would have done something.

This is fair. You don't have to just fall on your sword and remain silent when there are circumstances that people need to know to be truly just. 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.

Very clever, very wise way to remind David that God says vengeance belongs to him. And she very tactfully reminds David that David is coming out from under the Lord's authority by avenging himself instead of letting God take care of the enemies. Very tactful, very subtle, very oblique.

She doesn't say, what do you think you're doing coming over here and avenging yourself? She says, as the Lord lives and as your soul lives, and she immediately starts reminding David that the Lord is in charge. The Lord, capital L, has a higher authority than my Lord, small l, David. As the Lord lives and as your soul lives.

Since the Lord has held you back from coming to bloodshed, she puts this in the context of God's plan and purpose. In one sentence she mentions the Lord twice. What does this do? It calls David back to his senses.

It calls David back to himself and his own sense of obligation to the authority of God. Avenging yourself with your own hand, 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. Notice the Lord, capital L. What a terrific woman in, as she speaks, reflecting the perspective that will calm David, bring him back to his senses, remind him of who he is and where he stands in God's plan.

There's a lot more at risk here than even Abigail knows. Who's going to be the ultimate descendant of David? And what happens if David fails at this point and disqualifies himself from having the greater son, capital S? There's a huge amount riding on this that nobody could know. God's plan is for David to have a line of descendants that are going to result in the Savior.

And if David disqualifies himself at this point, there's going to be a whole different plan of God. So she reminds him, as the Lord lives, the Lord will certainly make for my Lord an enduring house. Now who's the king at this point? Saul.

So how much is known about David in the household of Nabal? Not only does Nabal know that he's the son of Jesse, but Abigail knows, which means Nabal knows, that he has been anointed by Samuel. This circulated in Judah. They're in the southern realms of Judah.

And when she says, the Lord will certainly make for my Lord an enduring house, because my Lord, David, fights the battles of the Lord, capital L, and evil is not found in you throughout your days. God is with you and God will bless you and give you an enduring name and an enduring house because you serve Him and evil is not found in you. You are entirely serving.

You are entirely dedicated. Yet a man has risen to pursue you and seek your life, but the life of my Lord shall be bound in the bundle of the living with the Lord your God. And the lives of your enemies He shall sling out as from the pocket of a sling.

Now how clever an allusion is that? She reminds him of his roots. She knows the story. She knows the history.

She knows that God has been with David from his first public appearance in facing Goliath. And it shall come to pass, verse 30, when the Lord has done for my Lord according to all the good that He has spoken concerning you. How does she know what the good that the Lord has spoken concerning David? He has appointed you ruler over Israel.

She recognizes that there is a higher authority in this case than her husband, and it is the anointed future king of Israel, who even now serves the Lord, is accompanied by the Lord, is blessed by the Lord, and she is in a position to be a blessing to him and to prevent him from disqualifying himself. She can't do anything about her husband. He is already around the bend.

And she doesn't waste her time and her opportunities trying to convert a man who will not be anything but a fool, who willingly chooses to be evil, conniving, a scoundrel, a son of Belial, and a

dog. She does recognize that David is in a moment of rash decision. He's in a moment of rash behavior, and reminding him of the truth of the Lord and the word of the Lord that applies to him has an effect.

He has appointed you ruler over Israel, verse 31, that this will be no grief to you nor offense of heart to my Lord, either that you have shed blood without cause or that my Lord has avenged himself. She's speaking the truth in love, reminding David of what he already knows, but he's acting on impulse. And he's justified in his own mind because this is an affront and an insult to his men.

And he says, well, nobody's going to treat my men this way. And he can easily justify it in his mind if he doesn't stop and think, wait a minute, there's more at stake here than just the immediate moment, just the immediate circumstance. And Abigail reminds him of this.

But when the Lord has dealt well with my Lord, then remember your maidservant. David says to Abigail, and he's calm, clothed, and in his right mind now. David says to Abigail, blessed is the Lord God of Israel who sent you this day to meet 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. The truth that she speaks has sunk in. For indeed, as the Lord God of Israel lives, who has kept me back from hurting you, unless you had hurried and come to meet me, surely by morning light no males would have been left to Nabal.

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. Now Abigail went to Nabal and there he was holding a feast in his house like a feast of a king.

Nabal's heart was merry within him. He was very drunk. She told him nothing, little or much until morning light.

So it was in the morning when the wine had gone from him. His wife told him these things. His heart died within him and he became a stone.

God judges Nabal at the moment of God's choosing and in the manner of God's purpose. It happened after about ten days that the Lord struck Nabal and he died. How many young men did David send? And those men were treated with disrespect and humiliated.

So how many days does Nabal sit there unable to move having to think about the young men he disrespected who served David? Ten days. One day for each man. And after the ten days he is stricken.

David heard 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. David sent and proposed to Abigail to take her as his wife.

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. She rose, bowed her face to the earth, and said, Here is your maidservant, a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my Lord." She doesn't look at this as a promotion to be the future queen. She knows where David is headed.

She knows he's headed for the palace. But she has humility and recognizes that this is an opportunity for service. She doesn't look at it as a promotion, as an opportunity to be aggrandized and made rich.

Here is your maidservant, a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my Lord. A servant of servants shall he be to his brethren. You remember that back in the Curse of Ham? It's the lowest place you can be.

And that's where she puts herself. Abigail rose in haste, rode on a donkey. It's no accident here that Abigail brings the presence to David on a donkey, and then she rides to David on a donkey.

We've talked about this donkey picture before, looking at the tragic entry and the association that it has, the prophecy that your king will come to you lowly, riding on a donkey. And there's always two donkeys. There's the donkey and the foal, the two of them.

You remember the prophet that died because he was disobedient, and the old prophet that led him astray came riding on a donkey with the dead prophet on the other donkey. We've seen these connections. But she rode on a donkey attended by five of her maidens, and she followed the messengers of David and became his wife.

And of course David winds up accumulating quite a collection of wives. But this is the contrast. This is the difference between the blind agreeing that you find in Acts chapter 5 with Sapphira, and the recognition that there are bigger issues, there is a greater righteousness, and there is a higher authority that Abigail reflects.

And look at the space in the Word of God that is devoted to Abigail versus the space that is devoted to Ananias and Sapphira. They get a few verses in the first part of Acts chapter 5. Abigail gets an entire chapter, and it is her example that shines as a beacon and illumination to our path. How important is it for us to be thoughtful, to be consistent, and to be faithful in recognizing that authority, whether it is exercised or whether it is served under, comes from God and has to be recognized in the fear of the Lord.

In the Lord. Children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Wives submit to your husbands as unto the Lord.

How do we know when it is time to depart, to separate, to disobey, to do something different than

what the authority wants? It is a function of the Holy Spirit. David recognizes, Abigail recognizes that this encounter is of the Lord. God sent her to meet Him.

And the servant who tells her is sort of a loose reflection or picture of God the Holy Spirit who prompts us, who gives us the opportunity to do something different, to do something that actually serves God's purpose. And this is why to refuse that knowledge, to ignore that advice, that counsel, that prompting, is to be false to the Holy Spirit. Nabal misses an opportunity to provide for God's people.

Ananias misses an opportunity to provide for God's people, to be a blessing to them through what God has granted. And in both cases there is judgment. But in one case the wife shares the judgment and in the other she escapes it and becomes Queen of Israel, eventually.

It all has to do with understanding this important truth that Paul reflects and communicates in Ephesians chapter 5. Well this brings us to the children obey your parents in the Lord section and servants be obedient to your masters, all again in the Lord. And these are things that are pictures and points of application for us. So we'll pick up our study in Ephesians chapter 6 next time but let's close here in a word of prayer.

Father we thank you for the truth of your word. We thank you for the memorable and graphic ways that you communicate to us your will and the way that we should walk. We pray that your Holy Spirit will make these things live and act within our thinking and within our souls to cleanse us, to show us the way clearly, to give us the opportunity to serve and to reflect your glory and accomplish your purpose in this life.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.