

How a Covered-Dish Supper Saved God's Kingdom

(1 Samuel 25)

9/16/15; Wed PM Pine Grove

Introduction

Let me read you a quote from William Blaikie, who was a Scottish pastor of the 1800s..

In my opinion, he has written one of the greatest commentaries on 1 Samuel that has ever been done...

But he makes this quote about 1 Samuel 25 that really stuck with me...

“It is a mark of sincere and genuine godliness to be thankful when God rescues us from suffering. However, we should be just as thankful to God when he protects us from sinning.”

We all know the Lord's prayer, and an important part is found in Matthew 6:13...

And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil..

But how often do we pray that?

And how often do we show our gratitude to the Lord when He does keep us from sin?

Now, the challenge is this..

Often times, we may not even be aware that God has protected us from sin, so how can we express our thanks when we aren't even aware of it?

And that is a good question for sure...

And I would say this, just make thanking God for his protection from sin a daily part of your prayers.

Because He does protect us from sin very often in our lives.

You ever had anger rising in your veins over something to the point when you are getting ready to sin...

But then sends someone to you to calm you down...

To get your mind off of what is happening...

The person may not even be aware that you are angry..

They just simply show up and call, and the anger goes away and your don't sin in your anger...

Could that be God using someone to keep you from sin?

You ever had car trouble and had your day delayed by those inconveniences of life?

Could it be that those delays kept you from a situation where you would be tempted to sin?

Absolutely...

And tonight we are going to see David headed down a path of sin...

David is taking his men to shed innocent blood, but God is going to send a roadblock to David's plans...

And it is going to come from one of the most unlikely of places..

Yet that is how the Lord often operates.

Can he put an angel in your way to keep your from sinning?

Sure, He can.

He sent angels to block the path of path of Balaam and his donkey.

But sometimes the Lord blocks our path in other ways and we are going to see one way that he does that tonight in David's life.

I have entitled this message "How a Covered Dish Supper Saved God's Kingdom."

And here is what I mean....

The story of 1 Samuel is the story of God's kingdom growing and developing in His time...

In 1 Samuel, Israel gets their first king after they refuse to let God be their king..

And God gives them Saul, who quickly shows why he isn't fit to be king...

Now, the lesson for us and for Israel is that God's plan to bring his kingdom forth will not fail because of a worthless king..

No, God is going to continue His kingdom plan through another king, who is King David...

David will be a much better king than Saul but David will also show that he is an imperfect king as well...

And all of that is leading up to God revealing the perfect King, who will come to the world in a manger in Bethlehem..

Be rejected and killed, and to this day, we await His return to be the king that the world has always needed..

That's the big picture of God's kingdom plan, but in 1 Samuel, the future of the kingdom seems to be resting on David.

Saul is corrupt.

Saul is disobedient.

Saul has shed much innocent blood in his pursuit of David.

From a human perspective, David is Israel's only hope...

And though he has shown kingly qualities, David is still a sinner...

And in chapter 25, David's sinful nature will be shining brightly..

And it going to take a woman with a covered-dish supper to set David right...

To help him turn from his desire to sin, and keep his eyes on the prize of being the next king of Israel..

In all of this, we are going to learn much about ourselves as well...

I want to offer 3 lessons from 1 Samuel 25 to apply to our own hearts tonight...

Though we are unlike David in many ways, we all share the same sinful nature that David possessed..

And I think we are going to learn some valuable lessons...

The first lesson that we will see in 1 Samuel 25 is this...

I. The Temptation to Sin is Around Every Corner (1-13)

Let's look at verse 1..

25 Then Samuel died; and all Israel gathered together and mourned for him, and buried him at his house in Ramah. And David arose and went down to the wilderness of Paran.

Verse 1 marks the end of an era in Israel's history.

Samuel was the last of Israel's line of judges, and he was also Israel's greatest.

We met him way back in chapter 1 of 1 Samuel when his mother Hannah gave birth to him...

We watched him grow up in and around the tabernacle in Shiloh...

WE watched him anoint Saul as Israel's first king, and then we watched him head to Jesse's house in Bethlehem to anoint David as the next king of Israel.

Samuel is probably the most admired of 1 Samuel.

He has been God's spokesman to both Saul and David as well, but in verse 1, Samuel dies.

All the nation comes to a standstill to death as he is buried in his hometown of Ramah.

Now, this verse has little to do with the chapter, this is simply just a piece of information that God passes on to us through the author of 1 Samuel..

What are we to make of it?

Probably not too much because the writer moves back to the action at hand in verse 2...

But let me offer something here, and feel free to disagree if you like...

But as we move into the next set of verses, we are going to see David be tempted to sin greatly...

And the comment that I want to make is this...

Often times, sin lurks in the extremes of life...

In times of great joy, we often find temptation to sin...

In times of great sadness, we are tempted to sin..

In times of great exhaustion, we are often tempted to sin...

I always tell myself to be on the lookout for sin in the unlikeliest of places because sin often crouches at our door in the extremes of life..

I'm sure David was heartbroken over Samuel's death...

And maybe in that extreme sadness, he let his guard down for a moment and sin came running at him...

Don't know that for sure and I don't want to stress that too much because the Bible never says that, but it interesting to see what how David is tempted to sin after Samuel's death...

Always be careful when you are really happy or really sad or really tired, temptation and sin are usually never far away in those situations...

Let's see what happens in verse 2...

2 Now there was a man in Maon whose business was in Carmel; and the man was very [a]rich, and he had three thousand sheep and a thousand goats. And it came about while he was shearing his sheep in Carmel 3 (now the man's name was Nabal, and his wife's name was Abigail. And the woman was [b]intelligent and beautiful in appearance, but the man was harsh and evil in his dealings, and he was a Calebite), 4 that David

heard in the wilderness that Nabal was shearing his sheep.

Now, this is a nice break for us from what we are used to in 1 Samuel...

We usually see where David is hiding from Saul when we begin a new chapter...

And we usually hear of what new tree that Saul is resting under holding his sword...

But for this chapter, we are going to take a break and meet some new people...

And in verse 2, we meet a nice couple.

Nabal and his wife Abigail.

Nabal was a rich businessman, but hard to get along with, and corrupt in his business dealings..

They say that opposites attract and that must have been the case because Nabal's wife Abigail was smart, pretty, and sweet.

Now, word reaches David that Nabal is shearing his sheep.

This would mean that all the sheep are gathered into one place, and that Nabal would be with them while they were being sheared...

And so David is going to send some of his men up to see Nabal...

Verse 5...

5 So David sent ten young men; and David said to the young men, "Go up to Carmel, [c]visit Nabal and greet him in my name; 6 and thus you shall say, '[d]Have a long life, peace be to you, and peace be to your house, and peace be to all that you have. 7 Now I have heard that you have shearers; now your shepherds have been with us and we have not insulted them, nor have they missed anything all the days they were in Carmel. 8 Ask your young men and they will tell you. Therefore let my young men find favor in your eyes, for we have come on a [e]festive day. Please give whatever you find at hand to your servants and to your son David.'"

David's men travel to speak with Nabal.

It is obvious from the text that David and his men had provided protection to Nabal's shepherds and sheep during their time out to pasture..

David had been on the move in and around the area where Nabal's shepherds and sheep were located..

Most likely, David's men had helped the shepherds fight off predators or maybe a few Philistines or other thieves who may have threatened Nabal's flock...

It would have just been a nice neighborly thing to do to help these shepherds if David and his men were in the same area.

And so David sends his men to Nabal.

The sheep would all be gathered together in preparation to be sheared.

The stress of being out in the fields with the sheep would be over for a while..

The shepherds would be sleeping with both eyes closed now that the sheep were not out in the open...

And sheep shearing time was often a time of great celebration...

There would be big feasts and the sheep owners were often in a good mood...

David just seeks to take advantage of that by sending his men to Nabal with a simple request...

How about you share the wealth with us?

We helped protect your flocks in the open.

None of them were lost on our watch.

We were also kind to your shepherds...

And this is not an outrageous request..

A man of Nabal's wealth could spare some food for David and his men...

Besides, it was a time to celebrate and enjoy the Lord's protection of the flocks...

And so, the men make their request to Nabal...

Let's see his response beginning in verse 9....

9 When David's young men came, they spoke to Nabal according to all these words in David's name; then they waited. 10 But Nabal answered David's servants and said, "Who is David? And who is the son of Jesse? There are many servants today who are each breaking away from his master. 11 Shall I then take my bread and my water and my meat that I have slaughtered for my

shearers, and give it to men [f]whose origin I do not know?” 12 So David’s young men retraced their way and went back; and they came and told him according to all these words.

The description of Nabal back in verse 3 proves to be true..

Nabal treats David’s men harshly.

He pretends to not even know David, even though everyone in Israel knew who David was..

And then he sends David’s men back home empty-handed..

How does David respond?

Verse 13..

13 David said to his men, “Each of you gird on his sword.” So each man girded on his sword. And David also girded on his sword, and about four hundred men went up behind David while two hundred stayed with the baggage.

What is David going to do?

Well, he is headed to kill Nabal for his refusal to grant his request.

David is preparing to shed innocent blood because he didn't get what he wanted.

Can I have a few of your sheep to feed my men?

No.

Ok, well I will murder you then.

Now, there is no doubt that Nabal was a harsh man and evil in his business dealings...

But David had no right to go kill him.

And here is where we find our first lesson tonight...

Temptation lurks around every corner in our lives...

Sin does not go on vacation in our lives...

Our battle is an on-going, hand-to-hand combat with temptation and sin...

Now, the strange part of this chapter is what happened last chapter...

Remember last week?

Saul walked into the cave where David was, and yet David showed incredible self-control and restraint to not end Saul's life right there..

And here we have the scene in 1 Samuel and he is abandoning all self-control and restraint and strapping on his sword to go kill Nabal..

And the lesson is that we never completely arrive from our battle with sin.

Just when you gain a victory over a temptation, that same temptation pops right back up.

I was in Targe the other day watching John Andrew play with a Jack-in-the-Box, and he would close the top, turn the handle, and then jump every time, the little clown popped out..

And that is a picture of sin...

We can overcome it at times, but always know that it keeps coming out at us...

And we must stay on our guard and be ready for a temptation to come at us...

Even on the heels of a great show of self-control of not killing Saul, David now appears to have no self-control...

And the future of God's kingdom doesn't appear too bright when the next king is ready to kill because the he doesn't get his food on time...

And so, let's see how God works this out....

II. The Protection of God's Sovereignty is Around Every Corner (14-31)

Verse 14...

14 But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, saying, "Behold, David sent messengers from the wilderness to [g]reet our master, and he scorned them. 15 Yet the men were very good to us, and we were not insulted, nor did we miss anything [h]as long as we went about with them, while we were in the fields. 16 They were a wall to us both by night and by day, all the time we were with them tending the sheep. 17 Now therefore, know and [i]consider what you should do, for evil is plotted against our master and against all his household; and he is such a [j]worthless man that no one can speak to him."

One of Nabal's servants gets word that David is headed to confront his master....

And so he goes to Nabal's wife with the news...

And why does he go to her?

Look at verse 17...

Nabal was so foolish and harsh that he wouldn't listen to anyone...

I don't even need to ask you if you know someone like that...

We all know people like that.

People who you can't even talk to even if you are trying to help them..

They are so harsh and mean that they won't even listen to a warning about their own approaching death...

One the most inviting qualities in a person is be a good listener and a slow speaker...

Nabal is neither one.

Even to the point that one of his own servants doesn't feel comfortable enough going to him with the news that David is coming to kill him...

So, he goes to Abigail, and he tells her that David is on the way....

Verse 18...

18 Then Abigail hurried and took two hundred loaves of bread and two jugs of wine and five

sheep already prepared and five measures of roasted grain and a hundred clusters of raisins and two hundred cakes of figs, and loaded them on donkeys. 19 She said to her young men, “Go on before me; behold, I am coming after you.” But she did not tell her husband Nabal. 20 It came about as she was riding on her donkey and coming down by the hidden part of the mountain, that behold, David and his men were coming down toward her; so she met them.

And here is why we see this title of a covered dish saving the kingdom..

Abigail prepared a meal for David's men and the hurried to meet him before he arrived at her house...

The quickest way to a man's heart is through his stomach, or at least Abigail hopes that is true...

So, she rushes out and meets David as he is coming down the mountain toward her home...

Verse 21...

21 Now David had said, “Surely in vain I have guarded all that this man has in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that belonged to him; and he has returned me evil for good. 22 May God do so to the enemies of David, and more also,

if by morning I leave as much as one [k]male of any who belong to him.”

Here we see David doing what so many of us do, he is replaying the injustice in his mind...

That sorry Nabal won't even give me a sheep to feed my men...

He's got 3,000, and I can't even get one...

And then the famous words probably rolled around in his mind...

“He ain't gonna treat me like that. Does he know who I am?”

And that is what temptation and sin do to us...

We allow it to simmer until it reaches a boil..

We put temptation in our mind and we let it grow until it blinds us from thinking straight...

And so David is rushing headlong into sin, and then the Lord graciously sends a woman with some good food but some even better words...

Let's read all of her words from verse 23 to 31...

23 When Abigail saw David, she hurried and dismounted from her donkey, and fell on her face before David and bowed herself to the ground.

24 She fell at his feet and said, “On me [l]alone, my lord, be the blame. And please let your maidservant speak [m]to you, and listen to the words of your maidservant. 25 Please do not let my lord [n]pay attention to this [o]worthless man, Nabal, for as his name is, so is he. [p]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.

26 “Now therefore, my lord, as the Lord lives, and as your soul lives, since the Lord has restrained you from [q]shedding blood, and from [r]avenging yourself by your own hand, now then let your enemies and those who seek evil against my lord, be as Nabal. 27 Now let this [s]gift which your maidservant has brought to my lord be given to the young men who [t]accompany my lord. 28 Please forgive the transgression of your maidservant; for the Lord will certainly make for my lord an enduring house, because my lord is fighting the battles of the Lord, and evil will not be found in you all your days. 29 Should anyone rise up to pursue you and to seek your [u]life, then the [v]life of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of the living with the Lord your God; but the [w]lives of your enemies He will sling out [x]as from the hollow of a sling. 30 And when the Lord does for my lord according to all the good that He has

spoken concerning you, and appoints you ruler over Israel, 31 this will not [y]cause grief or a troubled heart to my lord, both by having shed blood without cause and by my lord having [z]avenged himself. When the Lord deals well with my lord, then remember your maidservant.”

Abigail delivers a rousing speech to David in the most tender way...

She shows respect by bowing before him..

She offers the gift of food to David and his men, and then she appeals to David's sense of right and wrong...

Look at verse 30...

She tells David that he is going to be the next king of Israel....

And when that day comes, he doesn't want to have regrets over shedding innocent blood, like he is about to do against her husband Nabal..

Abigail is making a good argument to David to keep him away from sin that he will live to regret.

And it is a blessing in our lives to have people who point us away from sin...

Isolation is a horrible thing in this world.

I am grateful for men and women who have pointed me in the right direction in life...

Who have spoken good sense to me when I was acting like I had no sense at all...

And the lesson for all of us is this...

God's sovereignty is around every corner....

He always provides a way out from...

HE will not tempt us beyond what we can bear and he will always provide an escape route from sin...

David's escape route has come to him with a woman and her covered-dish supper...

How will he respond?

And this will be our final outline point, which is.....

III. The Continuation of God's Kingdom is Around Every Corner (32-44)

The story of the Scriptures is often the story of 1 Samuel 25...

Sin comes, God protects, and God's plan moves forward....

Let's see his plan march forward in David's response to Abigail..

Verse 32...

32 Then David said to Abigail, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me, 33 and blessed be your discernment, and blessed be you, who have kept me this day from [aa]bloodshed and from [ab]avenging myself by my own hand. 34 Nevertheless, as the Lord God of Israel lives, who has restrained me from harming you, unless you had come quickly to meet me, surely there would not have been left to Nabal until the morning light as much as one [ac]male." 35 So David received from her hand what she had brought him and said to her, "Go up to your house in peace. See, I have listened to [ad]you and [ae]granted your request."

David is grateful for Abigail's intervention in his life...

He admits that he had planned to seek revenge on his own terms against Nabal...

And that seems so strange because do you remember what David told Saul in chapter 24?

1 Samuel 24:12...

***12 May the Lord judge between [h]you and me,
and may the Lord avenge me on you; but my hand
shall not be against you.***

It is incredible to think that David was about to violate his own words just a chapter later by taking matters in his own hands...

And I think that shows the incredible power of sin and the incredible weakness of the flesh...

We say one thing on one occasion, but we are ready to violate what we say in another situation...

That was the struggle of Paul in Romans 7...

I do what I don't want to do, and I don't do what I want to do...

And he argued back and forth with himself until he finally threw his hands in the air and said...

Thank you God for Jesus Christ who sets us free from this body of death...

And here we see David just win the victory over sin with the right words and actions in one scene...

Yet in the next scene, he almost does the exact opposite of leaving revenge to the Lord...

So, David agrees with Abigail, receives her gift of food and drink and does not go to kill all the men of her husband's house...

Though tempted greatly, David has once again left the Lord to avenge the wrong that has been committed against him...

And how does that work out for David?

Verse 36...

36 Then 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 did not tell him anything [af]at all until the morning light. 37 But in the morning, when the wine had gone out of Nabal, his wife told him these things, and his heart died within him so that he became as a stone. 38 About ten days later, the Lord struck Nabal and he died.

The short answer to how does God respond to David's refusal to kill Nabal is that God strikes Nabal dead.

And the principle is that God's kingdom plan continues to move forward...

David's enemies continue to fall before him.

God continues to protect and bless David, and David continues to obey and honor the Lord with his actions...

Let me close with the final verses of chapter 25...

Verse 39...

39 When David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, "Blessed be the Lord, who has pleaded the cause of my reproach from the hand of Nabal and has kept back His servant from evil. The Lord has also returned the evildoing of Nabal on his own head." Then David sent [ag]a proposal to Abigail, to take her as his wife. 40 When the servants of David came to Abigail at Carmel, they spoke to her, saying, "David has sent us to you to take you as his wife." 41 She arose and bowed with her face to the ground and said, "Behold, your maidservant is a maid to wash the feet of my lord's servants." 42 Then Abigail quickly arose, and rode on a

donkey, with her five maidens who [ah]attended her; and she followed the messengers of David and became his wife.

43 David had also taken Ahinoam of Jezreel, and they both became his wives.

44 Now Saul had given Michal his daughter, David's wife, to Palti the son of Laish, who was from Gallim.

The end of chapter 25 is a mix of emotions for the reader..

On one hand, we celebrate with David as he has shown self control and allowed God to fight his battles...

Nabal is now dead, and God has shown once again that he is David's protector...

But on the other hand, we grieve in the final verses, because we also are reminded of David's weaknesses...

Here, he is marrying more than one woman...

He was first married to Michal, Saul's daughter...

We see that Saul took her away from David in verse 44...

So, David marries Abigail....

(He must have liked her cooking.)

But then we also see that he married Ahinoam of Jezreel.

And David is also going to marry other women as well...

And this is all a violation of God's design for one man and one woman...

We don't have time to talk about the problem of polygamy tonight, but I assure that it was sin.

And God was not pleased.

In fact, all of those wives are going to bring problems to David for the rest of his life...

And such are the consequences of sin...

We will talk about that more in 2 Samuel, but just know that God does not approve of this in David's life...

Yet, God allowed it for a while to demonstrate His incredible patience and grace..

And so in some ways, the final verses here are a sum of David's life...

He is both a king, but he is a sinner just like you and me...

And even though His sin is great at times, God's patience and protection of David is even greater.

And why is that?

Why does God protect David so much?

Because God is going to bring One much greater from David's line...

He is going to bring a King from David who will never sin.

He is going to bring a King who will never give into temptation even though he will be fully tempted.

God's plan is to highlight David's greatness to Israel while also pointing on his weakness, so that Israel looks forward to the day when that perfect King will come...

That is not to say that we forget about David; it is simply to say that we in a time when One much greater than David has come...

And we are to worship and obey Him.

Conclusion

So what do we take home with us tonight?

I would say this...

Always remember that sin keeps pushing on us....

So we need to always be pushing back...

But we also need to remember that God is always protecting around us...

And then finally, God's plan is always persevering through us..

His plan is going forward as He works all things for good to those who love Him...