

Abigail's Intercession

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[0 : 00] Now, we're thinking this evening about this part of chapter 25 in 1 Samuel, which, as you'll have recognised, is the account of Nabal and David and the threat of David's violence against Nabal and his camp.

Because it wouldn't just be Nabal himself that would end up suffering if David and all his men descend upon the camp. As David said, he intended to wipe out all the men of the camp. And you might think, oh, well, that would mean Abigail would be okay and that would mean the women and children would be okay. So that's not so bad, is it? But as we read earlier on, you know, when it says that one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, saying, Behold, David sent messengers out of the wilderness to salute our master and he railed on them.

And then they were a wall to us. They protected us while we were out in the fields with the flocks and herds. And because they camped there, nobody else bothered us or attacked us and the wild beasts stayed away and so on.

And they were like a wall to us. And we never lost any of our beasts. And, you know, when you think about it, the amount of military authority that David must have applied in order to prevent that happening, anybody nicking any of the flocks or the herds or just a stray beast here or there, just swipe it and bring it into the military camp and roast it over the fire and nicely augment to the rations there.

[1 : 23] And that would have been very tasty for the men, but they left everything alone. And the only reason they would do that is because David would have given them strict orders that none of Nabal's beasts were to be touched.

Why do we say that? Surely maybe they were just virtuous men themselves. Well, we turn back to 1 Samuel 22. We see at the beginning there, it says, David therefore departed thence.

And he escaped to the cave of Dullam and with his, when his brethren and all his father's house heard it, they went down thither to him. And everyone that was in distress and everyone that was in death and everyone that was discontented gathered themselves unto him and he became a captain over them.

And there were with him about 400 men. By now his army is swollen to about 600 men because 400 go with him and 200 remain with their camp gear and so on.

So about 600 men he's got altogether. And they're not exactly, you know, those of professional military discipline. Now those are discontented, those who are in debt, those who are running away from problems, those who may be chancers, those who may be just looking for some booty or from spoil or whatever the case may be.

[2 : 35] He has attracted, basically, for want of a better word, bandits, robbers would be, but those who are controlled by his military discipline.

And because of David's authority over them, nothing is touched of Nabal's flocks and herds. But the young man that comes to tell Abigail, this young man, he himself would stand to be slaughtered. Every male in the camp would stand to be slaughtered. You would think, oh, well, at least Abigail and the others, they'll escape. Yeah, but what would be the state of a camp after David's men had descended on it?

After perhaps they've taken what they want with the flocks and herds anyway, so now they're the poorer. They've slaughtered every male in the camp. All you've got now is a handful of women and children who are now totally vulnerable to any other raiding marauders or anybody else that might come that way.

They have no defense. They have no protection. They have no food now because David and his men would have taken the whole lot. But there's disaster coming on the camp. Disaster is coming

on the camp because of Nabal's own particular attitude.

[3 : 41] Now, of course, you could say, Nabal's entitled to do what he wants with what's his own. He doesn't have to share with David if he doesn't want to. No, but there are consequences to everything that we do.

When Nabal is told by Abigail about what was about to happen, came to pass in the morning when the wine was going out of Nabal and his wife had told him these things, his heart died within him and he became as a stone.

The shock of how close he had come to being totally destroyed, it knocked all the stuffing out of him and he became like a stone, it says. Nabal, there, is not so very different from what ordinary fallen mankind is like.

He thinks that everything he has, he has just because he's so capable and successful. He thinks that if nothing has been lost, then that's simply down to either good fortune or because, again, his shepherds, his herdsmen are so capable, it doesn't cross his mind that it is because somebody else has protected him, because somebody else is watching over him, that he has prospered, that he's been blessed, and he has no inclination to share with anybody else.

It's like if we look out into the bay and we see a ship going past or the ferry going out, crossing over to the wing or whatever, we just think, oh yeah, who sails the ship? Or we pass a field of beautiful standing corn or whatever, whether here on the mainland or whatever it might be.

[5 : 12] Or we see a house that's built, we just think, there's a house, there's a ship, there's a field. But we don't stop and think that in order for that simple fact of a ship to sail on the sea, there has to be engine room staff, there has to be all the engineers, there has to be the crew, there have to be those that feed them, they have to make sure that everything is oiled and working and maintained.

There's constant activity and work going on just so that from the outside we can see the ship sailing along. You see, a field from a standing corn, it didn't get there by itself, it didn't happen by accident, it's not just a chance event, it's because that piece of land was cleared and the rocks cleared out of it and the dike built around it and it was ploughed and it was fertilised, it was sown and it was tended and then the corn came up.

You see a house that's been built. It didn't just drop down out the sky. The foundations had to be cleared, the plans had to be made, the clerk of works had to oversee all the builders and the workmen, all the materials had to be brought.

Everything that happens, happens because a huge amount of invisible work has gone into it. We just see the finished product. Nabal just sees the finished product.

The godless or the unbelieving simply see everything and think, yeah, this just happened. This is how it's meant to be. This is what we expect it to be. And never give a thought to the God who causes it to happen, to the God who maintains and protects it all, and to the God who expects legitimately some measure of worship or acknowledgement from us whom he has blessed so much.

[6 : 50] And because we will not do so, because mankind is so disinclined to acknowledge the Lord or to render him his due, we know, and we take the Bible as a whole, what is due to befall mankind on this earth at the last, and that is the wrath and the vengeance of God.

How in the world is that wrath to be averted? Because Nabal, he doesn't even know that that wrath is coming against him. He thinks he can just speak how he likes to David or to his servants and tell them to get lost and there's going to be no consequences.

An unbelieving man believes he can thumb his nose at God or at his followers or whatever the case may be and there'll be no consequence. Because he doesn't actually believe in this God anyway. And everything just happens the way it is. Nothing was put in to make the world the way it is or everything fall out the way it does. No effort, no divine work went into it because they don't believe in any of that.

It just happens. It's just easy. It came to us just the way it is. And when we begin to recognize the wrath that is about to descend in the fullness of time upon mankind, upon the world, eventually upon us as individuals, you can see why Nabal reacts as he does.

[8 : 07] And we, when we finally become by the grace of God sensible of the wrath that stands to descend upon mankind, we begin to get a bit of a reality check.

And it's not just Old Testament wrath in that sense. You know, remember what John the Baptist says to his disciples at the end of John chapter 3, you know, the father of the son and given all

things into his hand.

He that believeth on the son an everlasting life, he that believeth not, the son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him. It remains on him. It was heading for him already like a heat-seeking missile, but unless it is averted, unless somebody stands in the gap and gets in the way and turns away the wrath, it's going to strike without any question, without any difficulty. So here we have then Abigail. Abigail, who in the Lord's providence is placed within the camp of Nabal and all his flocks and herds and servants and so on, one person with the opportunity and with the authority, because the servants don't have the authority, they don't have the means to go and take their master's goods and go and seek David, but Abigail has the means.

She knows what to do. She acts on it and she makes an act of what we might call practical intercession. She goes out to seek David and his men.

[9 : 33] She heads off the threat. She offers up what we might call this sacrifice. She intercedes on behalf of her husband, not because he is necessarily worthy of being interceded for, but she asks for this mercy from David.

mercy that, yet, may not be deserved, but, you know, the rest of the camp don't deserve to be slaughtered either. And for his own reputation that he doesn't end up having his hands stained with blood in destroying the righteous with the wicked.

And David receives of her offering, receives of her sacrifice, takes her advice, says, blessed be my advice, he says to her, and he is interceded for, for Nabal and his man.

This principle of intercession, yes, we read about it plentifully in the New Testament as well, but it would be a mistake for us to think that it's only in the New Testament that we have it.

We are used to think in terms of the Spirit and of Christ himself interceding for his people. You know, Romans 8, for example, verse 26, likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

[10 : 54] And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. And again at verse 34, who is he that condemneth?

It is Christ that died, yea, rather than is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. God the Son, by himself and by his Spirit, interceding for his people, interceding for the saints, but the saints are not saints because of their virtue.

They are saints because of what Christ has done for them. And because Christ, as we read in Hebrews, ever liveth, is able to say to the uttermost and have come to him to God by him, seeing that he ever liveth to make intercession for them, that is part of his purpose at the right hand of God. God is constantly throughout Scripture telling his people that they are to be like him. They are to be as he is. You know, in the Old Testament, be ye holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.

And Paul writes to Timothy that intercession is to be made. Prayer is to be made. Even for those that perhaps we might think don't specially deserve it.

[12 : 07] perhaps none of us is deserving of Christ's intercession. But we read to Timothy, 1 Timothy chapter 2, I exhort, therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings, and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God, our Savior, who will have all men to be saved and to come into the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all to be testified in due time, whereunto I am ordained a preacher and an apostle.

I speak the truth in Christ and lie not a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity. I will, therefore, that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting.

And just in case we may think, oh well, Savior of all, that means all are going to be saved.

Remember what we have in chapter 4, verse 10, therefore we both labor and suffer reproach because we trust in the living God who is the Savior of all men, especially of those that believe.

Now, either you're the Savior of all men or you're not. Now, clearly he is not going to be one who redeems absolutely everybody in the whole entire world. We know that not everybody is saved.

[13 : 29] But in the sense of being the Savior of all, he is the one Savior who has been given for the whole world, for all mankind. Those who believe will actually be saved by him.

But he is the Savior that has been given for the whole world, for all. There is only the one. And that one is given for all. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him, especially of those that believe, should not perish but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world that the world through them might be saved. Now this intercession then we find in the New Testament the church is encouraged to make it.

We ourselves must intercede for our nation, for those who rule over us as we've been taught, kings and all those in authority. So it does behold a Christian in this country for example to pray for the Queen, to pray for the governments in Westminster and in Holyrood regardless of whether or not we agree with their political party or colour or policies or whatever.

The powers that be ordained of God and in God's providence whoever happens to be there has been put there under his authority. It behoves us to pray for them.

[14:46] To pray that they would be guided by God, that they would have humility to rule in the fear of God. Lots of them don't. That doesn't absolve us of our responsibility to pray for them.

We also have a responsibility obviously as we know to discharge our civic duty later on in May and then in June we'll have elections or referendums or whatever and it is our civic duty to participate in notes, to exercise such power as the Lord has placed in our hands and it's not much.

It's one little cross upon one little piece of paper or two little crosses if we've got the additional kind of vote as well for the parties in the Scottish Parliament one.

But a couple of crosses on a bit of paper. That's all we get. That's the only power that we get but such as we have we have a duty to exercise it for the good of our nation, for the good of our people. But above all that we should do that. Yes, that practical help but above all that we are obliged to pray, to intercede for our nation, for our island, for God's church, for those to whom we belong.

[16:04] Because the reason Abigail is able to head off David's wrath is because in the Lord's providence she has been placed in the midst of that camp.

She's not someone else in the Ammonites or whatever. She's right there. At that point she's in the midst of that camp. And right now only one person has the power and the means to intercede for that camp which is a breath away from being obliterated.

And that is Abigail. She is there able to make that intercession acceptable in the eyes of David.

Now of course we know that such intercession we find repeatedly in the Old Testament as well as elsewhere in the New.

We think of Esther for example who we read in chapter 7 verses 3 and 4. Esther the Queen answered and said if I have found favour in thy sight O King and if it please the King let my life be given me at my petition and my people at my request.

For we are sold I and my people to be destroyed to be slain and to perish but if we have been sold for bondmen and bondwomen I have held my tongue although the enemy could not countervail the King's damage.

[17:18] There she is in the royal court the one person with power and means to actually intercede and as they undoubtedly the most famous verses in the whole book of Esther as Mordecai said to her previously in chapter 4 verse 13 Mordecai commanded to answer Esther think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the King's house more than all the Jews but if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time then shall their enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place for thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this and undoubtedly for such a time as this Abigail is there in the midst of Nabal's camp interceding for those who otherwise will be destroyed now we don't we shouldn't get too sort of spiritualised about this it doesn't say here that Abigail is a converted woman it doesn't even say that she regularly worships

Jehovah the Lord it does say however that she's a woman of good understanding and of a beautiful cantonance okay fair enough leave that aside but of good understanding verse 3 she recognises the danger and because she recognises the danger to those amongst whom she dwells she goes out in intercession she goes out to meet the threat as it were half way and to meet it head on with an offering with that which may placate the wrath of the avenging future king now of course we ourselves we're all placed somewhere we're not just placed in a nation such as ours which having been blessed so much in the past with the Lord's privileges and being the people of the book as we used to be called but now having fallen away from the covenants that our fathers made with the

Lord many centuries ago we have turned our back upon him we have become a nation of darkness of unbelief of evenism and yet the Lord still has within this nation within this land those who can and will intercede for their communities for the nation for their families and if we will not do it who will because who knows whether we've been placed where we have been for such a time as this who knows whether if you are perhaps the only believer in your family or perhaps you and one other person that maybe there's a spouse or a son or a daughter maybe there's a parent who is not a believer and they're showing no sign of any kind of repentance or any softening of heart who is going to avert the wrath of God against that unrepentant sin well it can't be ultimately turned away but it can perhaps be stayed for now with intercession by one who loves the person and loves the Lord because that person themselves they may love their spouse or their child or their parent but they don't love the Lord so they can't pray for themselves they can't intercede but this other person can and whether there be one believing soul in an island or in a mission or in an extended family who knows but they may have been placed there for such a purpose at such a time because the believing prayer of those who will go to the Lord go out as it were to the Lord with an offering not of oxen and sheep and raisins and everything like Abigail had but with the only offering that is acceptable the name and sacrifice of Christ Jesus on behalf of those who will trust and believe in him such a sacrifice such an offering is acceptable to the Father such an offering is acceptable to God and it has been made once and for all for all who trust and believe in him that is what we plead that is what we as it were go out to the Lord with go actively seeking we don't just sit and twiddle our thumbs and wait till the wrath of God falls and say oh by the way just like to say this and just like to see here you don't wait for it to happen

Abigail doesn't sort of sit pacing up and down at the edge of the camp waiting till she can see David and his men in the distance she goes out she takes the asses laden with all these goods she sends the servants ahead of her there's no time to lose go up to where the threat is and meet it and seek to avert the disaster for now she doesn't in the end save Nabal's life because his heart becomes like a stone and he dies for ten days later but at least he and everyone in his camp doesn't get slaughtered because the intercession has been made as of course we see in what's arguably the oldest book of the Bible Job right at the beginning in chapter 1 verse 5 we read it was so when the days of their feasting that is of Job's sons and daughters feasting were gone about Job sent and sanctified them and rose up early in the morning and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all for Job said it may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts thus did Job continually interceding for his children pleading on their behalf just in case something had been done inadvertently or perhaps in a drunken stupor they had taken the Lord's name in vain or cursed God or whatever but we see even more active intercession by Job at the very end of the book in chapter 42 verse 8 the Lord says therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams and go to my servant

Job this is the Lord speaking to his three friends Eliphaz the Timonite and Zophar the Nehemiathite and I can't remember the old ones named just now but anyway they go to Job take now seven rams and seven bullocks and go to my servant Job and offer up for yourselves upon offering and my servant Job shall pray for you for him will I accept lest I deal with you after your folly in which you have not spoken of me the thing which is right like my servant Job him will I accept you can bring your burnt offerings and you can make your sacrifices but it is him that I will accept and likewise with ourselves we can bring our sacrifice of praise we can give our time to the Lord our efforts our energies our prayers our worship and song and everything else but at the end of the day it is his only beloved son that he will accept and not anything that we do we go to him to intercede on our behalf we may intercede for those who cannot pray for themselves we go to the Lord on their behalf but ultimately who will go for us it is only Christ and it is only in Christ's name that we can plead likewise for others the Lord will not destroy the righteous with the vile this is what

[24 : 41] Abraham pleads of course to the Lord in Genesis 18 notice we're all still in the Old Testament all this interceding taking place the old as Esther and Job but Genesis here as well in chapter 18 verses 23 and 25 Abraham drew near and said wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked that be far from thee to do after this manner to slay the righteous with the wicked and that the righteous should be as the wicked that be far from thee shall not the judge of all the earth do right remember of course if David had slaughtered everyone in the camp as well as Nabal who was guilty an awful lot of innocent people would have died as well but we read in chapter 19 then of Genesis that the Lord takes Abraham's intercession to heart because when the angels are bringing out Lot and his family the angel says to him see I have accepted thee concerning this thing also and

I will not overthrow this city for the which thou hast spoken haste thee escape thither for I cannot do anything till thou become thither therefore the name of the city was called Zohar meaning Little the little city to which he escaped but notice what the angel says

I cannot do anything until you've come there safely I cannot destroy Sodom and Gomorrah which are meant to be destroyed but I can't do it while you're there because the Lord will not destroy the righteous with the wicked and who knows whether the presence of a believing saint of the Lord and interceding praying saint of the Lord though they be set in the midst of unbelief or indifference or hardness of heart in their family or community or island or even nation where there is one such soul the Lord the Lord will not destroy the righteous with the wicked and as long as that person is there pleading and praying and interceding for their nation or their family or their people or their island the Lord will say I cannot destroy them yet I cannot send my wrath upon them yet because there is yet one there who is being faithful one there who is falling out in faithfulness to me such is the Lord's mercy in the Old Testament and in the New he will not destroy the righteous with the wicked he will hear the intercessions of his people if they have a mind of a heart to make them and one of the things the prophet Ezekiel is sent to tell the Israelites or those in captivity in Judah is the gloom the sorrow that the Lord has because when he finally came to visit wrath upon the people of Jerusalem and Judah there wasn't anyone to intercede there wasn't anyone to plead and to pray

Ezekiel 22 verse 30 I sought for a man among them that should make up a hedge and stand in the gap before me for the land that I should not destroy it but I found none there wasn't anyone to plead there wasn't anyone to intercede there wasn't anyone to stand in the gap with a make up stand for the law of God and his righteousness there were none and so the wrath just fell on Jerusalem and on Judah now most of us have in either our immediate families or our extended families those who do not love the Lord those who will not acknowledge him as the saviour those who have perhaps little or no time or are perhaps you know they're not against they're not hostile they're just you know that's fine for you but it's not okay for me and I just choose to ignore it I just think everything happens by magic like watching the ship on the sea or totally seeing the field on the land or the house that we haven't to drive by we just think it just happens we think it happens by magic people didn't pile in work and effort to make it happen

God didn't do anything special to keep my life on an even gear it just happens this complete ignorance this blocking out of reality like Nabal did oh my flocks in my house they just happen to be kept safe by magic they just happen to be kept protected from wild beasts and from any other predators or attackers just by coincidence it's nothing to do with the fact that David and his men were there protected just ignore the truth that is stealing you in the face and we all have souls like that in our island Egypt and all extended families we certainly have them amongst our neighbours we have them in our island we have them in our communities we certainly have abundance of them in our nation who is there to plead for the nation for the island for the family if not those who know Christ the ultimate intercessor if they will not go out from the camp and seek the Lord on behalf of those who are a breath away from destruction then who will do it who knows whether we are come to the kingdom for such a time as this who knows whether that is precisely why the Lord in his providence has taken all the years and the time and the circumstances that he has utilised and brought them together in this unique combination to place you if you are a praying believer exactly where you are in the midst of that family or setting or church or people or island or community where there are either none or perhaps few to pray and to plead and intercede for those round about as long as there is a little light burning as long as there is an intercession of prayer ascending on behalf of them all is not lost or not lost yet and the wrath will be held off it will be averted remember what the angel says to God

I cannot do anything until you are gone until you have gone into this city until you get out of the place that is meant to be destroyed and it may be that the Lord holds off as long as such a praying light has not yet gone out the smoking flax he will not quench and the bruised reed he shall not break in the prophet Isaiah when Isaiah sees the glory of the Lord in chapter 6 verse 8 we read I heard the voice of the Lord saying whom shall I send and who will go for us then said I here am I send me is this the thing to which the Lord has called us we are some of us yes are called to go out as missionaries to other countries some may be called to work as official missionaries or church planters in our own country and each one of those is specially called to the Lord and set apart to that and they need the prayers and intercessions and upholdings and supplications of the Lord's people as well but we can't just sort of wave them bye bye and say well that's them they're off doing

the mission work they're off doing the interceding and helping for these people for where the Lord has placed us there is a purpose there is a burden of prayer of intercession because wrath is intended against mankind which has turned away from the

[32 : 34] Lord against Scotland which has turned away from the Lord against our islands which have turned away from the Lord increasingly yes there are still souls in this nation who will love the Lord still souls who will pray on its behalf and whilst they do there is yet life and hope for the nation for the islands perhaps for our families too if we are praying in the midst of that why do you think the Lord has placed you where he has placed you why do you think he has brought within your orbits perhaps those who may be known to you or dear to you who as yet are outside of Christ he has placed his spirit in your heart his burden of prayer upon your soul that for those near and those perhaps beloved whether they are immediate family or extended family or just the family of our nation and land all must be raised up before the

Lord in intercession because wrath stands ready to fall upon our nation and upon our islands and perhaps upon those we love most closely except we who be equipped with the spirits or the grace of God not for anything good in us but because purely of his mercy will take that which has been placed in our hand you see Abigail alone is the one with the authority to get all these assets together lay them with the raisins and corn and meat and wine and all the rest of it and send them out to David his servants may be terrified but they don't have the authority to say yeah bring these donkeys they can't do that but the mistress of the camp she can do it the one who has that authority and that power in her hand she can do it she has been given this authority this position this situation she alone can intercede there and each of us has something the Lord has placed in our hand it may be one talent instead of five maybe five instead of ten but the

Lord has given us what he has and expects us to use it expects us especially to have a burden and a heart for those around us and those beloved by us this practical intercession of Abigail's saves the camp and saves the life temporarily not only of her husband but permanently of the rest of their natural lives of all the males and potentially all the women and children too and the fox and the herds in the camp this timely intervention brings benefits that the rest probably may not even be aware of and they only find out about later but still the benefit is real and the connection thereafter is made permanent because David delights in the one who intercedes and in the fruits of time she becomes his wife too and the connection is made permanent and the

Lord delights in those who will intercede on behalf of others even perhaps on behalf of their enemies and persecutors that's what we're taught in the New Testament isn't it pray for those who despite believe you as you love your enemies Jesus said and we know that in this land Christians are far more likely than any other people group to be discriminated against to be sacked from their jobs to be kept out of opportunities to be passed over for promotions to be marginalized to be ridiculed to be mocked Christians are fair game no other religion is treated in this way no other people group are so much exposed to this and that's just the beginning the more the evil one gets a handle in this land the more violent will be the attacks the more unrestrained will be the evil of his work but it behoves those who love the Lord to intercede to pray for those in authority over us to pray for our nation our kingdom our land yes to take our due part in the political process yes to use such as the Lord does put in our hands such limited powers we have but whatever limitations may be upon power we can exercise in this world there is no limit upon the power that we have access to through the

Lord Jesus Christ all power is given unto me in heaven and earth he says therefore go and teach all nations how will we teach them if we cannot intercede for them if we cannot pray for them I know that many will and do pray with yearning and earnestness for those near and beloved to you who are as yet outside of Christ that there are so much more many to pray for there are so many more at risk than just us and those nearest to us and it behoves us whom the Lord has placed where we are and when we have been placed here to use the time redeem the time for the days are evil and seek the redemption seek the blessing seek the protection and the safety and the well-being and the Lord's grace for those amongst whom he has placed us at such a time as this diseasesines and we woundundos ême