

“Folly Or Faith”
1 Samuel 25:1-44

October 8, 2017

SI: On a historical level, the book of 1 Samuel is about the establishment of Israel’s monarchy, and about how David became God’s chosen king. On a spiritual level, 1 Samuel is about what it means to live by faith.

INTRO: There’s a free newspaper in the little town where my parents live, and it has section with short news stories of dumb criminals. You’ve heard the term “criminal mastermind.” Well, these are not masterminds. I poked around on the internet and found there are collections of these stories.

There was a bank robber in San Diego.

Before he demanded the teller hand over the money, he swiped his debit card in an ATM to check his balance. So that made identification pretty easy!

An Indiana man robbed a convenience store, and he also made off with food, drinks, and cigarettes—everything he needed for his getaway.

But guess what he didn’t steal? Gas.

State troopers found him stranded with an empty tank a few miles down road. A Florida man called 911 to report someone had broken into his car and stolen \$50 and a quarter oz. of cocaine. Of course deputies responded very quickly, and they found enough cocaine in his car that had not been stolen to arrest him.

When we hear the word “fool,” this the sort of person who usually comes to mind. Someone dumb. A stupid idiot.

But that’s not how the Bible describes fools.

The Bible talks about fools a lot, especially in Psalms and Proverbs.

And there’s a fool in this story. This man Nabal.

His name is the same as the word for fool.

Obviously his parents didn’t name him fool.

This must have been a family name or place name.

I once met a woman whose last name was Boney.

She was actually not boney. She was the opposite.

But in this case, Nabal’s character matched his name. He was a fool.

But he was not dumb.

He was ill-mannered, belligerent, hard to live with, hard to work for—his servants couldn’t stand him.

He was a tight-fisted man, a hard-bargaining man.

He was a shrewd and successful businessman farmer.

He was very wealthy. Owned large flocks and herds.

Had many people working for him. He enjoyed an extravagant lifestyle.
He also may have had political influence.

In subsequent references to Abigail, even after she is married to David,
she is referred to as Nabal's widow. Which indicates he was well-known.
And speaking of Abigail, she was a beautiful woman.

Nabal was a rich man with a beautiful wife.

Nabal possessed many of the qualities and trappings of successful people.

Even today we could identify people who are just like him.

Shrewd. Successful in terms of power, influence, possessions.

On the surface we wouldn't call him a fool.

He's got it all and he's mostly keeping it together.

But the Bible calls him a fool.

So why was he a fool?

Was it just that he misjudged David and almost got himself killed

if it hadn't been for his wife? Is that it? That he made a foolish decision?

I think it's deeper than that. Two things make a fool according to Bible.

1. A fool is someone who lives a God-ignoring life
2. A fool is someone who inherits a God-forsaken destiny

What about you? Are you a fool?

Let's look at these and let God's word search us and remind us how much
we need faith in Jesus.

MP#1 The fool is someone who lives a God-ignoring life

As I've already pointed out in the example of Nabal, fools are not stupid people.

They could be, but a fool could be intelligent and successful.

The heart of foolishness as the Bible defines it is living a God-ignoring life.

Not acknowledging or even seeing his hand in the world.

A fool is someone who only sees material things.

Psalms says: "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.'"

There's a song by the Beatles called *The Fool on the Hill*. Refrain goes:

The fool on the hill Sees the sun going down

And the eyes in his head See the world spinning around.

I'm sure they weren't trying to make a theological point.

Maybe this was about one of their drug trips.

But even so, it does capture the biblical definition of a fool.

The fool is someone who focuses on the externals.

He just sees the world spinning round and the sun going down.

For him it's all about this material world.

He focuses on what he can see and touch and handle and manage and possess.

God is not part of the equation.

The fool constructs a life for himself in which God does not play a part.

Look how Nabal illustrates this. You see it in his speech in verse 10-11.

David sent his men to ask Nabal for some food and provisions.

It does sound a little fishy to us, what David tells them to tell Nabal.

Remind him that the whole time shepherds around us, we never stole from them.

It sounds like a protection racket.

But there's some Ancient Near Eastern cultural stuff going on here.

This was a true service David provided that should have been recognized.

David's men followed all the proper manners. Three times shalom.

They are actually honoring Nabal with this request.

He has the opportunity to become a benefactor of David.

But he responds with insults. Makes David's men wait.

Who is this David? Who is this son of Jesse?

Many servants are breaking away from their masters these day.

Nabal knows who David is, knows his conflict with Saul.

He puts David down. Calls him a runaway slave.

This is what people of folly often do to people of faith.

Put them down for their trust in God. Mock their faith and convictions.
Then look what Nabal says next: He claims personal credit for all he has.
My bread, my water, my meat, my shearers.
This is the defining characteristic of the fool.
He takes credit for all he has and all he has accomplished.

Now look at Abigail and David in contrast.

Rather than living God-ignoring lives, they live God-dependent lives.
There's nothing supernatural about Abigail and David.

What I mean is that they don't see visions of God or hear God's voice.
They are just living their lives.
And their lives are far from perfect.

David is a fugitive, he's a man on the run.

Abigail is a bright, exceptional woman married to a boor.

David is trying his best to be a leader and provider for 600 men following him.

He takes it on himself to protect Nabal's shepherds, expects some reward,
instead he gets put down, insulted, decides to take revenge, stopped by Abigail.
There's nothing supernatural here either. Angels don't intervene.

A voice from heaven doesn't speak and give David instructions.
I'm making the point that they are just going through life, making decisions.

But what is remarkable is that when something good happens,
both Abigail and David attribute it to the active intervention of the invisible,
sovereign God.

When Abigail finds David on the road, before he has a chance to carry out his plan,
what does she say in verse 26?

She says: The Lord has kept you from bloodshed, avenging yourself with hands.

She did it. She came up with the plan. She took the initiative.

She stepped in and persuaded David and kept talking till he calmed down.

But who did she give credit to? It's the Lord who has kept you.

Same with David.

When Abigail finished her speech the first thing out of David's mouth was:

Praise be to Lord, God of Israel, who has sent you to me today.

Unlike Nabal, they see beyond the surface.

They don't just see sun going down and world spinning round, they see the hand
of God involved in the events and activities and decisions of their day to day life.
And they comment on it.

James says that when you do business you should not say—

We're going to go to this or that city and start a business and make money.
Should say: If it is the Lord's will, we will do this and that.
It's a pattern of speech that characterizes people who depend on the Lord.
people who depend on God both learn and use.

Plenty of people say "thank God" or something like that in a moment of extreme relief when a crisis has passed. Lots of people pray in foxholes.

But this is something different.

It's an every day, ordinary, acknowledgement of the Lord's hand in every good thing that happens in life.

When you encounter it, it's remarkable.

Just this week I was talking to a believer and he was relating how a few months ago had he had gotten connected to a good doctor who was treating health problems. He said the Lord led me to that good doctor.

That sounds like a little thing. Almost like a throwaway phrase.

But Nabal would never have said that.

I tracked down the best doctor. That's my doctor.

My bread, my wine, my successful sheep shearing
Those comments are windows into the soul.

There are many of you in this church body who think and talk in a way that expresses your God-dependent view of life.

I marvel at it. Because this is something I've always struggled with.

I don't speak this way easily.

It's because I don't depend on the Lord like I should. God-ignoring tendencies. So when I hear the Lord spoken of by some of you with such gratitude and ease, it both blesses me and challenges me.

Maybe there are some of you here this morning who, like me, need to repent of your lack of dependence on God, and the God-ignoring tendencies in minds, ask Holy Spirit to help you say more often from the heart—Praise be to God!

This first characteristic of the fool is visible.

Can see evidence of a person ignoring God. Let's look at second characteristic. This is invisible, at least for the present.

MP#2 The fool is someone who inherits a God-forsaken destiny

This week there have been so many heart-breaking stories out of Las Vegas. Some of the most sobering and thought-provoking photos are not of the wounded and the dead, but those pictures taken just moments before shooting started.

I saw one photo of a husband and wife.

Looked like they were about my age and Allison's. Probably empty nesters.

Having a great time with each other. Grinning at the camera.

It said they posted the picture on their social media.

I'm sure all their friends and family saw it. But right after that the wife was dead.

What happened to her then? Heaven or hell? Eternal life or the second death?

I'm sure you saw the news that Hugh Hefner died.

I read one commentator who said Hefner contributed to the abuse of women by turning them into sex objects.

I read another commentary that said he empowered women to flaunt their sexuality and use it to their advantage.

I didn't see any opinion pieces about Hefner's final destiny.

Jesus said it would be better to have a millstone put around your neck and be thrown into the depths of the sea than to cause a little one to stumble.

How many people did he cause to stumble? No opinion pieces about that.

Our secular media does a good job of vividly portraying tragedies.

But it's always from the fool's perspective.

It's only about this world, this life cut short.

It's only about the things people had or accomplished in his visible world.

No mention of God. No mention of eternity. Only what can be seen.

Nabal's life and everything that was important to him was based what he had.

His stuff. His power and influence. Throwing his weight around.

Then he had a heart attack or a stroke, apparently went into a coma for 10 days, and then he died. God struck him dead.

What happened to all his stuff? What happened to his power and influence?

What happened to everything that made up the structure of his life?

I know it's a cliché but he didn't take it with him.

He was stripped of it and faced God naked and alone.

Look at the way Abigail comments on the destiny of the fool.

(By the way, longest speech by a woman in the Bible.)

She says to David:

“The lives of your enemies he will hurl away as from the pocket of a sling.”
David had to catch that. What’s she obviously alluding to?
David killing Goliath with his sling. She’s letting him know she’s a fan.
She understands how to influence men.

But back to this vivid image.

What happens to a rock hurled from a sling?
It’s gone. It’s lost. It’s used and never recovered.
That’s the destiny of the fool.

When a man or a woman lives with a total focus on the stuff of this present existence and then they’re dead—
they’re separated from it forever and have nothing.

But what about people who live a God-dependent life?

What did Abigail say about them?

“Your life will be bound securely in the bundle of the living by the LORD your God.”
That is such an evocative image of comfort and security.

Think of the times when lives are bundled up securely.

A newborn baby swaddled and wrapped in blanket.

A child with the covers tucked right up under his chin by mother.

Maybe even a person who has been injured, bundled into ambulance by attentive, emergency personnel. We’re going to take good care of you.

This poetic imagery of the Lord’s care bundling us up not used anywhere else in the Bible.

Abigail had a way with words, just like David.

No wonder there was obviously some chemistry between them.

Too bad David had a weakness for women.

It ruined his capacity to have a good marriage and it caused all sorts of grief.

But that’s another story. Maybe we’ll get to it eventually.

David was a flawed, sinful man. Comment here at the end about his multiple wives is an ominous foreshadowing of problems, but he knew God, depended on God.

And his eternal destiny was not to be cast away like a stone from a sling.

But for his life to be bound securely in the bundle of the living by the Lord.

And that can be your inheritance and eternal destiny if you trust in Jesus Christ, and rely on him, and follow him. Your life will be bound up with his.

There’s a political reason this chapter was written.

It was to answer the question: What kind of king was David?

Did he ascend to throne like every other ancient king, hands covered with blood?

Or was he a different kind of king? A king who trusted God?
In the last chapter, and this one, and the next one, a trilogy of temptations to take matters into his own hand and get revenge on enemies.
Almost does it with Saul in the cave, and here with Nabal—but doesn't.
Listens to God's voice. Next chapter, just turns and walks away from revenge.

In doing that, David is an advance echo of Jesus Christ.
All through Jesus' ministry he was tempted to take things into his own hands—to win his Messianic throne through force.'

That's how the Devil tempted him in the wilderness.

But Jesus answered with Scripture.

James and John asked him, can we call down fire on towns that don't believe?

What do I have to do with you, you son's of thunder?

Peter told him not to go to Jerusalem, not to die.

Jesus said, Get behind me Satan. Don't have in mind things of God.

In Gethsemane, disciple pulled out a sword to defend him.

Put it away. Don't you know I can ask Father, 12 legions of angels?

Jesus lived the ultimate and perfect God-dependent life.

But what happened to him? His life was cast away like a stone from a sling.

He was naked and alone on the cross in those three hours of darkness.

He experienced the death of a fool, cut off from God and all comforts.

He died that death so that you don't have to die it.

And then his body was wrapped and bundled into the tomb by friends.

Soul bundled into Father's presence.

On the third day he rose from the dead.

By faith in him you can share in the power of his resurrection.

You can have eternal life.

Death for you will not be the end, but a taste of your future inheritance.

Two ways of living—folly or faith.

A God-ignoring life, or a God-dependent life

A life that accumulates stuff and then is stripped of it in the end when your soul is hurled naked like a stone into death.

Or a life that thanks God for every good thing and then at the end is bound securely in the bundle of the living by Jesus. Let's choose that that life.