

Transfer

It's a perfectly natural thing to get so engrossed in the details of something that we fail to see the big picture. We have a saying about that, "He can't see the forest for the trees." We commit this error or failing even when we're thinking about or discussing the Bible and our salvation. The Bible has so many fascinating narratives and people, and so much theology is in it, that we too easily miss what big thing the Spirit of God might be revealing. After all, the Holy Spirit is the ultimate author of Scripture and knows the big picture as well as all the minute details that make it up. So, let's ask, What is the grand, over-riding theme of the Bible?

Some cynics may protest. They will say that there is no such over-riding theme or, if there is, we can't know it. Or God is doing something so great that there is no single theme that encompasses everything. Or they argue from theology what it might be rather than from the Scriptures. Well, it seems to me that in the Bible, God has lovingly revealed to us things that otherwise cannot be known, *including* what big thing He is doing in the world. He wants us to know that because He holds us in the highest integrity. Therefore, He has embedded in the texts here and there pictures of the great themes of salvation history. And one such picture is in 1 Samuel Chapter 25. It's a long chapter, strategically placed for a good reason: it explains the importance of all the David narratives.

In brief, the story is as follows: David and his army were in need of provisions. Nabal was a wealthy man in the area, so David sent some of his soldiers to guard Nabal's flocks during shearing time. In return for this favor, David asked him for needed supplies, but Nabal scornfully, contemptfully rebuffed him. This provoked David to seek revenge on Nabal. But Nabal's wife, Abigail, a wise woman, was told of the imminent disaster and she immediately went out to meet David with a huge gift of supplies.

Abigail spoke to David with insight that could only have come from God. (This is the longest speech by a woman in the entire O.T.) She acknowledged that her husband was a fool, unworthy of David's wrath, and that she instead should bear the blame for the insult. She then went on in this magnificent speech to ask David for forgiveness, for she knew that David was the Lord's servant and that the Lord would preserve David, and that he would one day be king over all Israel. And she pointed out that God Himself would avenge David in His way. She honored and blessed David.

David accepted her gift and returned to his camp. But when Nabal heard what his wife did, he collapsed with rage. And shortly after that, the Lord took his life. Hearing Abigail was now a widow, David sought her hand in marriage, and she immediately got on her donkey and went to David to be his wife.

Let's think now about this event, because it's loaded with significance. Abigail was presumably in an arranged marriage with Nabal. He probably wasn't her choice of husband, or perhaps he somehow deceived her into marrying him. But there she was, as his wife under his authority. Nabal is a nasty person. He clearly is opposed to God because his character is ungodly and because he didn't recognize David as the Lord's servant, as he should have. The text says his end came because his "heart" failed him, meaning he had an anti-theistic spiritual problem. So God judged him. David is the promised anointed servant of God, the antecedent of Israel's Messiah. And who is Abigail? She is the humble, wise woman who recognizes David as the one who will save Israel and rule under God's sovereignty. So she wants to serve him and honor him. And when given the opportunity, she unites with David. Abigail transfers her loyalty from wicked Nabal to godly David. She comes out from under the authority of Nabal to be under the authority of David. But there's someone else in this story: God. He is the One who guided the story to its happy conclusion. He is the One who freed Abigail from bondage to wicked Nabal. He is the One who gave Abigail the wisdom to do what she did. He is the One who gave Abigail to be united to David in marriage.

This is the story of salvation! David is a type of Christ. Nabal is Satan. Abigail represents all the elect throughout all history who by God's sovereign hand are delivered from the authority, bondage and control of Satan into a union with the Jewish Messiah, Jesus, the incarnate Son of God.

In the Garden, the Serpent deceived the first woman into allying with him. By believing the Serpent's lies and actually doing what that belief called for, *viz*, eating the forbidden fruit, she came under the control and iron grip of Satan. She came under the authority of that wicked and formidable enemy of humanity and of God. By disobeying God, by not being loyal to Him, by ignoring His words, that first couple *and all their descendants* became sinners under condemnation. The rest of the Bible is the story of God reclaiming His beloved people. How? By having them transfer

authority from Satan by willfully abandoning him and uniting instead with God's obedient and loyal Servant. They thus come under the authority of God's Servant, the Son, and receive the surpassing blessings of union with deity.

The Exodus from Egypt was a transfer. The children of Israel were under the authority and iron grip of Pharaoh, the wicked ruler of Egypt. But God miraculously delivered that people and brought them under His authority. Thus they received the blessings of being in the presence of the Creator of heaven and earth. In Galatians 1:4, Paul explains that Christ's salvation "**delivers us from this present evil age**" just as the children of Israel were delivered from Egypt.

In his treatise on salvation, the Epistle to the Ephesians, the Apostle Paul discusses this transfer further in Chapter 2, verses 1 to 13 [please read!]. So we have peace with God, inexpressible joy, access to the Father, a radically new life to live and hope of eternal life in God's presence. "**For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins,**" Paul writes in Colossians 1:13-14. The essence of salvation is our having been delivered from darkness to light, from sin to holiness, from death to life, from Satan's dominion to that of the beloved Son, the Lord Jesus.

"Spiritual warfare" (Ephesians 6:10-20) is our carrying out the Great Commission, which effects the transfer of yet other people from Satan's grip into union with Christ. It is warfare because we are stealing Satan's trophies away from him, bringing them instead under the authority of Christ. It's why Gospel outreach and missions are our role and duty. Sanctification and eschewing worldliness is also our responsibility because we're now expected to be loyal to the holy One who rescued us from Satan and from his dominion. Worldliness is like the children of Israel, having been miraculously delivered from Pharaoh, wanting to go back to Egypt to be his slaves again. It's like Abigail wanting to go back to being Nabal's wife again. For believers to engage in idolatry is treason.

Perhaps we can go a bit deeper into the story of Abigail and David. What was it about Abigail that she became a type or representative of all the elect throughout all history? It must have been: (a) her humility. She humbled herself in the presence of David because she knew that he was the one who should be exalted. She was content to be his servant. And that's what her belief in David led her to do, serve him. (And by the way, let's notice that she served David in the way that *he* wanted, not as how she might have wanted.) Proud people aren't saved. Humble people are (see Isaiah 66:2b). Nabal was proud (just like Satan). Proud people won't serve Christ, they're too self-absorbed. And people who are saved live for one reason, to serve Christ. That's what our believing in Him should lead us to do. And there's: (b) She wanted to honor him – even to the extent of doing something radically unconventional as in this story. We honor Christ by obeying Him, serving Him, imitating Him, trusting Him, and loving Him. Our lives should be one great and ceaseless endeavor to honor Him. And (c), she had a firm grasp on the future as reality. She was living in the present on the basis of what she knew would happen in the future. She knew that God was sovereign and would make the promised future a reality. One more thing: (d) She acknowledged her guilt (v. 24). Because of her union with Nabal, she sensed that she shared in his folly. In all these ways, she reveals she is elect. Her spiritual insight, her supernatural wisdom, must be a gift from God. In our story, Abigail was "saved" by her faith in and love for David, who at the time represented (in type) Jesus the Savior, a salvation effected by God transferring her from union with Nabal into union with David.

So now let's also ask, Who is the real hero of this story? It's God! He's the One who effected the transfer of Abigail. He's the One who controlled the flow of events. He's the One who Abigail – and all of us who have been rescued from Satan – should glorify. He deserves to be exalted, for He is good.

The atonement that Christ, the ultimate son of David, achieved for us made this deliverance possible. His righteousness and obedience to the Father, His perfect selfless character, His infinitely generous and loving sacrifice of Himself for us – all these things are what were essential for God to deliver us from Satan's wicked dominion and from our sin nature. His atoning death and resurrection from the dead makes it possible for us to be united to Him and to receive His eternal life.

So, if we understand all that God in Christ has done for us may we respond in the only responsible and appropriate way, by being fully and lovingly submitted to Him as Lord. May we live purposefully, regardless of the risk or cost, seeking the deliverance of others from Satan's kingdom of darkness by reaching out with the Gospel, and may our lives bear much fruit to His glory. And may we be faithful to Him who saved us from unspeakably horrible yet fully deserved judgment. Whatever loss we suffer or sacrifice we must make to be faithful, He is worthy! Finally, God transferred us into the Kingdom of His dear Son for a reason, and that reason is this: That God may be exalted by our lives. So let us abandon complacency and indifference and worldliness and distracting pursuits, and let's commit wholeheartedly instead to live as God has revealed in His Word we should live. To the glory of God.